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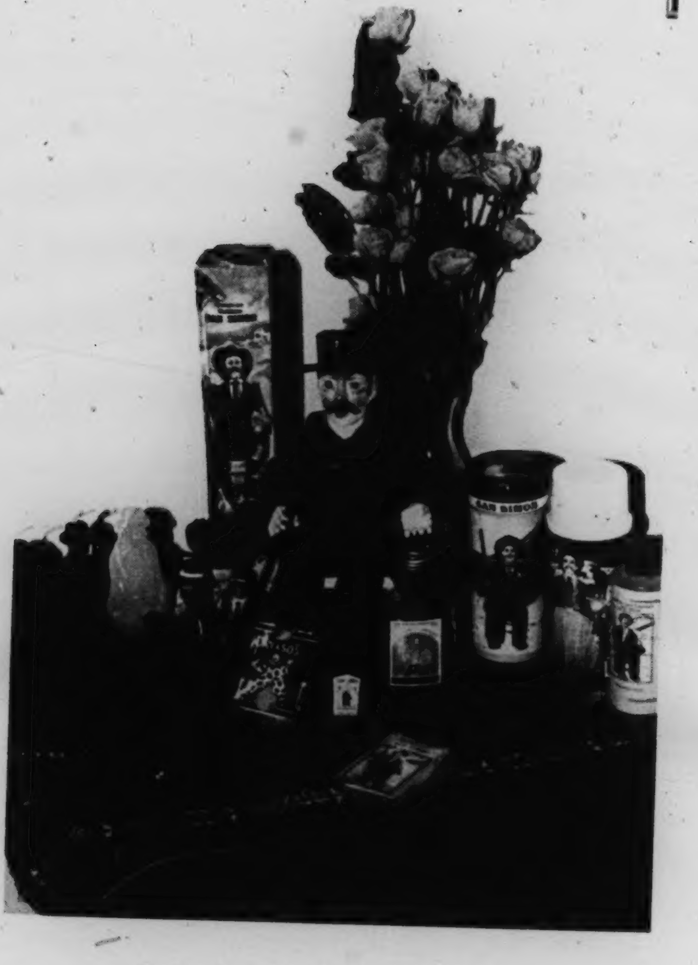

Frontispiece: San Simón Paraphernalia

From left to right: San Simón candles from Mexico; a herb bundle; small plaster effigies of Maximón and San Simón; San Simón incense sticks; cigarettes; a standard personal effigy of San Simón; San Simón 'essence'; 'Miraculous powder of San Simón'; liquor; San Simón votive candle; San Simón air freshener; 'Miraculous water of San Simón'.

University of Alberta

Religion, Community and Identity: Perspectives on the Cult of San Simón in Guatemala

by

Christopher James MacKenzie

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in
partial fullfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Anthropology

Edmonton, Alberta

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Jean DeBernardi

Dr. Jean DeBernardi, Associate Professor
Department of Anthropology

Dr. David Anderson, Assistant Professor
Department of Anthropology

Dr. Earle Waugh, Professor
Modern Languages and Comparative Studies

Para mis amigos de Centro Maya de Idiomas:
'El Rey de los Búfalos' les da muchísimas gracias
por su ayuda, enseñanza y apoyo tan generoso,
y por su amistad tan cariñosa.

Y para Don Albino Santay Chojolán:
Un amigo y un guía.

Abstract

The cult of San Simón in Guatemala embodies a myriad of conflicting religious traditions.This study focusses on the interpretations of two key players in current religious conflict: anti-syncretic Maya shamans (*sacerdotes mayas*) and Catholic priests practising 'inculturation' theology. The greater historical, political and social circumstances which have given rise to these individuals are examined before I turn to a discussion and overview of the cult of San Simón. In treating this tradition, different perspectives are taken by each player. *Sacerdotes mayas* seek to purify the tradition, rid it of associated Christian accretions (such as connections with Judas Iscariot), while Catholic priests are forced to reject it or carefully ignore it due to associations with evil San Simón carries. An overarching theme in this study speaks to the problematic nature of 'community' when considered by pan-Mayanists, Catholic priests, or anthropologists.

Preface

I first became interested in the tradition of San Simón in Guatemala during my initial trip to that country in 1994. Visiting San Simón's shrine in the town of Zunil, I was surprised to learn of the popularity of this saint, especially in light of the fact that I had read nothing of it in the anthropological literature on the area with which I had become acquainted through study for my undergraduate degree. Considering the large numbers of pilgrims and tourists alike who frequent the shrine, and the cryptic descriptions of it offered in guide books, it seemed strange that it had escaped the attention of anthropologists. Upon my return to Guatemala in 1996, I was interested to discover how widespread the tradition is, with San Simóns maintained in shrines throughout the highlands. While subsequent research turned up a good deal of literature on the tradition, the vast majority of this concentrated on Maximón from Santiago Atitlán, with very little written on the tradition of San Simón itself of which Maximón can be considered a variant.

My research in Guatemala from August to December 1996 was conducted with the aid and direction of my main consultant, Albino Santay Chojolán. Albino proved exceptionally enthusiastic about our work, and provided a great deal of insight into the various issues I develop below. I worked with Albino during afternoons and weekends when we were both free to do so, and spent the remainder of the day working as the International Coordinator for Centro Maya de Idiomas, a cooperatively run Maya and Spanish language school. The teachers at Centro Maya were likewise helpful and supportive of my research. The majority of data generated for this thesis came from interviews with a variety of religious specialists, generally conducted with the aid of Albino. My role as an anthropologist was made clear at each step, and monetary remuneration was made for each interview. I provide anonymity for the majority of individuals with whom I spoke, with the exception of Albino, who expressly wished for me identify him, and individuals (such as Padre Tomás García and Macario Zabala Can) who occupy very public positions.

Concern with ethical issues is particularly important in a country such as Guatemala, which has only recently ended a long and bloody civil war. While the nature of my research project was such that information relating to 'sensitive' areas (political affiliation, etc.) was not required, I have been careful to avoid using any data which may in some way compromise the safety of the people with whom I spoke and shared stories. While it is, of course, impossible to anticipate every ethical issue and eventuality, I made every attempt to minimize the negative effects of my presence by ensuring that informed consent was obtained from each individual. As it was, people were without exception very cooperative and ready to provide the sort of information I requested. The nature of my fieldwork, and subsequently the data it generated, was not of the kind which typifies anthropological research in the area (i.e. in-depth community-level studies). It was instead a survey-style project, with a limited amount of information gathered from a few sources in each town that maintains a San Simón tradition. Such was necessary considering time and financial constraints, and while much work remains to be done, important preliminary insights were, I believe, achieved.

Acknowledgment

I would like to extend my thanks to my supervisor, Jean DeBernardi, who provided excellent guidance and support through the course of my Masters degree. Her insightful comments and suggestions have served to strengthen this thesis and my understanding of more general anthropological issues. My thanks as well to David Anderson and Earle Waugh who served on my committee, providing astute criticism despite rushed deadlines. I am likewise grateful to Robert Carlsen for sharing with me his rich experience in Santiago Atitlán, providing detailed criticism of an earlier draft of this thesis and offering warm hospitality in Denver. I am eternally thankful to Andrzej Weber and Angela McFarlane for help during my inevitable computer crash. My thanks to Carrie Evans for her hospitality in Guatemala and Colorado, both times offering me a place to stay and providing wonderful company. David and Julie Munro must be thanked for the support (technical and other) they provided in Guatemala. I would like to extend my special thanks and gratitude to my friends from Centro Maya de Idiomas in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, for their companionship and support. In particular I am indebted to Tito Morales for introducing me to Albino. My debt to Albino Santay is clear in the work which follows, though I owe to him a more general thanks for his friendship and enthusiasm. I greatly appreciated the company and friendship of the students who studied at Centro Maya, particularly Melissa Coomes and Mark Pendras. I have likewise greatly valued the support of my parents, family and friends through the course of my studies. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the receipt of a Province of Alberta Graduate Scholarship and the Mary Louise Imrie Graduate Student Award which helped fund the research for this thesis. While acknowledging the debt I owe to the above individuals and institutions, the following interpretations and suggestions are, of course, my own.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction: Politics and Religion in Prehispanic and Colonial Guatemala 1

- i) Prehispanic and Colonial Political and Religious Systems in Guatemala 8
- ii) The Rise of Protestantism, *Acción Católica* and Inculturation and the Breakdowm of the Closed Corporate Community 27
- iii) San Simón: an Overview 43

Chapter 2 The Vicissitudes of Local Identities: Pan-Mayanism and Pan-Maya Spirituality 71

- i) The Nature of the Current Pan-Maya Movement 74
- ii) Maya Revitalization and the Growth of Pan-Maya Spirituality 100

Chapter 3 Syncretism, Anti-Syncretism and the Problem of Community: Religious Conflict and the Cult of San Simón in Guatemala 124

- i) Judas Iscariot in Orthodox and Popular Thought 132
- ii) San Simón Reborn: *Mam* and Other Indigenous Identities 152
- iii) San Simón and the Problem of Evil 167

Chapter 4 Conclusion: Religion, Politics and Identity 179

Notes 192

Bibliography 206

Appendices 216

List of Figures

1. Figure 1: Issues Considered in Terms of Actor 83

2. Figure 2: Coordinating Bodies of Maya Organizations and Affiliations—1991-1995 218

3. Map: Highland Guatemala 46

List of Plates

1. Plate 1: San Simón paraphernalia for sale in San Andrés Itzapa 44

2. Plate 2: San Simón's shrine in San Andrés Itzapa 48

3. Plate 3: Ceremonies and prayers for Zunil's San Simón 50

4. Plate 4: Xela's Judas Iscariot 60

5. Plate 5: Santiago Atitlán's Maximón 134

6. Plate 6: San Jorge la Laguna's San Simón with Albino 136

7. Plate 7: San Jorge la Laguna's San Simón assembled for Easter 137

8. Plate 8: Zunil's San Simón 138

9. Plate 9: The transfer of Zunil's San Simón on November 1 139

10. Plate 10: Xela's Judas Iscariot and Albino 140

11. Plate 11: Albino's *nawales* 162

Chapter One

Introduction:
The Politics of Religion and Community through Time

> "Better if the boy could die, Holy Cross of May, 'cause there's no cure for him, like a blind chicken, like paste gone black, who knows what he's got in his body, there's no life left in him, he's done for, ain't no medicine can help him."
>
> They looked up at the cross covered in river water, in volcanic lava, in chicken's blood, hen's feathers, maize silk, seeing it as something domestic, functional, solitary along the roads, valiant in the face of the storm, the devil and his thunderbolts, the hurricane, the plague and death, and they went on praying with the low murmur and even the acrid smell of leaching ashes, until their tongues were like loofahs, their knees deadened from so much kneeling, their hands dripping the white smallpox from the candles they held in bundles, their eyes like liana grapes.
>
> Miguel Ángel Asturius, *Men of Maize*

A common goal of studies dealing with indigenous religious systems in Mesoamerica and elsewhere is the elucidation of 'traditional' or pre-contact elements from later accretions. Concern with religious syncretism explicitly or tacitly guides such approaches, with scholars alternately denying the existence of any deep structural changes (eg. Vogt 1990), or suggesting the opposite—describing a blending of traditions and belief with stress laid on the triumph of Christian elements (eg. Ingham 1986). Recent studies of religious syncretism have served to further problematize the concept, demonstrating the inadequacy of approaches which focus on a simple 'trait list' of characteristics to determine the extent of synthesis, if any. As Stewart and Shaw (1994: 19-22) demonstrate, syncretism often arises as a direct reaction, and covert challenge to, political subordination, and may be read as a form of resistance. Moreover, syncretism can be profitably understood as a conscious and directed phenomenon as opposed to a passive and generalized transference or modification of beliefs. In order to grasp the complexity of the issue, full attention must be paid to the agents in question, as well as the historical and political circumstances surrounding their action.

Dispensing with ideas concerning a supposed pristine purity of interacting traditions—given a general tendency towards syncretic incorporation in both Christianity and prehispanic Maya religion (cf. Schineller 1992: 51-2; Freidel et al. 1993: 138-139)—the question remains as to how synthesis arises, under what conditions and to what effect. Whether or not religious syncretism represents an entirely new religious form, born of the interacting systems, or a continuation of one or the other system with slight surface modifications is a difficult issue to resolve. Such generalizations, one way or the other, must be tempered with a consideration of cultural realities—specific case studies and examples—which inevitably serve to complicate the issue. In the following pages I will not attempt to construct an overarching model which describes in a definitive manner the form of religious syncretism in Guatemala which I examine. It will be seen that both aspects—continuity and change—are represented at various levels depending on the perspectives of cultural agents concerned. Thus, following Stewart and Shaw, I focus on the political or ideological positions of these agents so as to provide a deeper view into the nature of religious conflict—real or potential—in the region. The notion of syncretism, as opposed to providing a concrete theoretical orientation for this study, is instead used as a conceptual vehicle to explore the nature of the two contrary elements it embodies. When using the term 'syncretism', unless otherwise noted, I refer to religious blending and combination with the understanding that the tradition considered is itself a 'new' product and not a disguised version of one or the other contributing systems. Upon closer examination, however, such a simple designation breaks down as continuities on one side or the other become evident.

In treating these issues, this study will focus on a particular example of syncretism in Guatemala. The popular saint cult of San Simón offers a unique window into the nature of religious conflict—or perhaps religious diversity—in the region, current and historical. As this cult occupies an ambiguous position in both orthodox Catholic and 'traditional' belief systems, analysis of its origins and current status will provide a novel perspective on the larger issue of religious syncretism. Directly related to this are the current, and somewhat limited, attempts by the Catholic church to 'inculturate' Maya spirituality into local religious life, as well as a recent movement among young Maya priests to purify their spirituality and purge it of all Christian elements. The latter movement is directly associated with a more general pan-Maya movement, with goals of political and cultural revitalization. The perspectives of these two 'agents' are contrasted in my analysis of the cult.

In treating these issues I combine historical and ethnographic evidence from a variety of sources, including five months of field research conducted in 1996. Interviews with a variety of religious specialists from different towns were conducted with the aid of my principle consultant, Albino Santay, who likewise provided his own interpretations on a broad range of issues. In adding an historical dimension to this study, much needed context is provided which permits a deeper understanding of the nature of religious conflict in the region. In certain respects the focus I assume is rather broad; such, I believe, is necessary considering the nature of the issues in question. Particularly as concerns the current pan-Maya movement, an examination of general historical processes leading up to this development is necessary to understand how it has taken root. A similar focus is necessary in treating religious issues, particularly in light of the fact that positions of key players, such as the Catholic Church, have changed dramatically through time in response to specific pressures. As regards the topical focus of the work, the cult of San Simón, the focus I assume is likewise broad, as my field research did not concentrate on a single town, surveying instead several communities where shrines to San Simón are maintained. I am able to draw, to a limited degree, upon published enthographies to give more depth to my observations, though in a general way I seek to establish some of the differences as well as similarities between cults in different towns, focussing on the tradition of San Simón itself as opposed to a single variant. Two inter-related topical themes guide the study, namely political and religious processes. These are brought into relief in each discussion, particularly in regards to how such have been understood in anthropological circles. By assuming a political focus in consideration of religious syncretism, the tension between this issue and its opposite—anti-syncretism and revitalization—is highlighted.

As this tension seems to exist most concretely at the level of community, the bulk of this introductory chapter serves to provide some context on the nature of community organization in Guatemala, and how this has changed through time. I examine the anthropological model of the closed corporate peasant community as applied to Guatemala, and provide some criticism of this model with regards to its failure to account for the rise of pan-Mayanism. The local village, while still an important source for Maya identity and culture, can no longer be considered the only source for such. The fracturing of a community-bound Maya identity is highlighted in consideration of political and religious change which occurred in the first half of this century. These changes include the increased importance of national party politics at the community level, and the rise of Protestantism and orthodox Catholicism. The most recent development in this regard is 'inculturation' theology, practised in a limited way by the Catholic church, which seeks to 'Mayanize' local Catholicism by valuing and encouraging elements of Maya spirituality. Inculturation is briefly described, and treated more thoroughly in chapter three in specific reference to its relation to the cult of San Simón. I conclude the chapter with an introduction to this cult, providing some ethnographic and historical context for the discussions which constitute the heart of this thesis.

In chapter two I describe the rise of pan-Mayanism, and pan-Maya spirituality as practised by a new generation of Maya religious specialists who are seeking to purify their traditions. As little has been written on either of these issues, particularly pan-Maya spirituality, I devote considerable attention to the description and explanation of these movements, their origins and place in contemporary Guatemalan society. Thus, the focus shifts in this chapter to consideration of revitalization and anti-syncretism. Pan-Mayanism represents something of a new development in Guatemala, and is itself a highly diverse and complex phenomenon. Pan-Mayanists are not wholly united in terms of ideology or agenda, though they have managed to unite in response to specific demands and pressures, and represent an increasingly powerful sector in the life of the nation. Pan-Maya spirituality is likewise a somewhat diverse movement, though attempts at organization and the establishment of orthodoxy are underway.

These two chapters provide the necessary context for the examination of the popular saint cult of San Simón treated in chapter three. Following a discussion of how San Simón has been the focus of religious conflict in two instances in the historical record, I treat two perspectives on the saint: one which stresses connections with the tradition of Judas Iscariot in Central America; the second stressing indigenous prehispanic identities ascribed to the image. Syncretism and anti-syncretism seem to be at work simultaneously here, depending on the perspective of the agent concerned. I demonstrate how San Simón is problematic both for Catholic priests concerned with inculturation—as this particular tradition contains elements which are difficult to reconcile with basic Christian theological principles—and for Maya priests practising a purified spirituality, as associations with Christianity in the cult are thought to contaminate the pure 'Maya' core of the tradition. The differences between these two players are thus brought into relief in consideration of their postures towards San Simón. A potential conflict between traditional 'syncretic' Maya spirituality or 'folk Catholicism' as practised at the community level and the purified 'pan-Maya' spirituality espoused by this new generation of anti-syncretic Maya religious specialists is outlined, demonstrating the problematic nature of the community in regards to the essentialized and orthodox version of Maya religion proposed for the Maya as a whole. I conclude with a consideration of differing perceptions of good and evil between orthodox Christian and 'folk Catholic' Maya, and suggest that this difference describes certain limits to inculturation, as exemplified in attitudes towards San Simón who in many ways embodies both good and evil harmoniously.

As mentioned above, the remainder of this chapter serves to provide the necessary context for issues treated more thoroughly in the remainder of the thesis. The nature and limitations of the closed corporate community are outlined, and the cult of San Simón is introduced. In treating the colonial history of Guatemala, I follow the lead of Nicholas Thomas (1994) in considering colonialism a fractured and partial enterprise, with a great deal of slippage evident both between the colonizers' understanding of the colonized, and between colonial agents themselves. This slippage, together with Maya resistance and nativism, was key in facilitating the survival of prehispanic forms of social organization and religious belief. An understanding of the competing interests which worked to determine the nature of colonial and current religious and political systems in Guatemala is essential to permit a comprehensive realization of the nature of syncretism and its antithesis—revitalization and anti-syncretism—in the case of San Simón.

Prehispanic and Colonial Political and Religious Systems in Guatemala

Centuries prior to the Spanish invasion, the great Classic Maya civilisation, with its remarkable ceremonial centres of the Petén in northern Guatemala had fallen. The population moved north into Mexico's Yucatan peninsula, merged with Toltec groups and formed a new civilisation with a base at Chichen-Itza. The Toltec moved further south and gradually conquered the remaining Maya of the Guatemalan highlands, though evidence suggests that the Toltec were subsumed to a great degree into local Maya culture, with the new conquerors functioning primarily in the capacity of a dominant elite, few of their traditions filtering significantly down to the conquered masses. By the middle of the 13th century, the Maya-Toltec centre of Chichen-Itza had likewise began to decline. In the Guatemalan highlands, new social organizations formed, under the direction of a 'Mayanized' Toltec elite, which fought for supremacy in the region. Linguistic differentiation appears to have been key in the formation of these new groupings, with the K'iche' gradually exerting the greatest influence in the region (Handy 1984: 18; Fox 1978).

The K'iche' 'empire' lasted through the Late Postclassic Period (A.D. 1250-1524), and is thought to have been in decline at the time of the Spanish invasion. At its height, the K'iche' occupied a region spanning from Guatemala's pacific coast, through the highlands and north to Chiapas, with an estimated population of one million. Of the rival groups subjugated by the K'iche', the Kaqchikel, Tz'utujil and Mam were among the most powerful, and managed to gain independence from the K'iche' by 1470. At the beginning of the 16th century, the K'iche' were weakened by incessant warfare, and found themselves paying tribute to the powerful Aztec state to the north. It was through the Aztecs that the K'iche' learned of the Spanish invasion, and while they offered the most organized resistance to Pedro de Alvarado and his invading army, they were nonetheless defeated in 1524. The Spanish were aided in this victory through an alliance with the Kaqchikel, former K'iche' allies. The Kaqchikel likewise rebelled in 1526, but were unable to offer effective resistance against the growing strength of the Spanish (Handy 1984: 18-20; Carmack 1981: 137-147).

While the nature of social organization prior to conquest has traditionally be considered in terms of 'kingdoms', something approaching state-level organization, recent scholarship has refuted this position. The model of pre-Invasion kingdoms, most clearly developed by Carmack (1981) has come under attack, as it seems the level of organization in this period never approached this level. Carlsen (1996: 142-143) provides a useful overview of this criticism, suggesting that the highest level of organization was the *amak*, a loose alliance of individual villages (*chinamit*). The *chinamit* is thought to have represented the most concrete form of social organization, its structure comparable to the closed corporate communities that developed in the colonial period. Linguistic groups, moreover, were not necessarily united in a single *amak*, as evidence suggests several of these confederations within individual language groupings.

Although the nature of religious life in pre-conquest times is largely a matter of speculation, archaeological and ethnohistorical evidence offer some insight. Gossen (1993) provides an overview of the development of religious belief in Mesoamerica, centuries prior to the Spanish invasion, suggesting that the growing complexity of political organization was reflected in an increasingly elaborate religious system. The Preclassic period (2000 B.C.-A.D. 100) is noted for the elaboration of beliefs relating to a cult to the ancestors, as well as the formation of cults to celestial, earth and rain deities (Gossen 1993: 4-5). These beliefs laid the foundation for the florescence in religious and intellectual achievement that marks the Classic period (AD 100-850). With the consolidation of political power in the region, remarkable advances in calendrics, astronomy, mathematics and writing systems were obtained, coupled with a clearer definition of major deities, such as Quetzalcoatl. Religious and political interests in this period were clearly united in what is considered to have been a powerful theocracy (Gossen 1993: 5-6). While the Postclassic period (A.D. 850-1521) is thought to have been a era of general decline as regards political unity, the levels of achievement in monumental architecture, literature etc. are certainly comparable to previous accomplishments. It is from this period that we have the most detailed and elaborate description of Maya beliefs regarding creation, as recorded in the *Popol Vuh*, a sacred text of the K'iche', written in the 16th century in a latinized K'iche' with a Spanish translation, and thought to be copied from an earlier hieroglyphic text (Gossen 1993: 7-8; Tedlock 1985).

A more specific and detailed treatment of pre-Invasion Maya religion and cosmology is offered by Freidel, Schele and Parker (1993) who draw upon a broad range of data to construct an image of a belief system which they argue to be largely continuous from pre-Invasion times to the present. While the depth and nature of such religious continuity—i.e. the suggestion that religous syncretism did not occur in any effective manner—is an issue treated in subsequent chapters, a cursory outline of their findings should prove useful. A core group of basic themes considered central to Maya spirituality guide the study. These include:

> ..the creation of the cosmos; the ordering of the world of people, and of the gods and ancestors of the Otherworld; the triumph of the ancestral humans over the forces of death, decay, and disease through cunning and trickery; the

> miracle of true rebirth out of sacrifice; and the origins of maize as the substance of the Maya body and soul. (Freidel et al. 1993: 43)

The authors, while primarily archaeologists and epigraphers, rely upon ethnohistorical, ethnological, astronomical and other evidence to add weight to their conclusions, particularly as regards the continuity of the belief system they outline, from the Classic Maya period to the present.

One fundamental issue treated concerns the unity of religious belief and practice among the early Maya. Responding to the suggestion by Thompson (1970) that there existed a fundamental rift between the religion of the Maya elite and that of the commoner, the authors suggest instead that the opposite appears to have been true. Drawing from personal experience and research, they reach the conclusion that archaeological evidence combined with the existence and persistence of patterns of belief in present times which are comparable to those of the Classic Maya and earlier "refute[s] the difference of religious vision that Thompson believed existed between the exalted and the humble Maya of antiquity. There is...a direct linkage between the rituals and beliefs of modern villagers and their ancient forbears" (Freidel et al. 1993: 43). Their task, then, consists in explaining how these beliefs survived both the collapse of the Classic Maya empire, and later Spanish colonialism. A brief summary of the nature of the belief system the authors describe, dispensing with much of the complex symbolism and imagery for present purposes, is necessary in order to better understand the conclusions they draw.

The creation of the cosmos is a central theme in Maya religion. The Maya calendar records this event as having occurred on the day 4 Ahaw 8 Kumk'u, the corresponding date in our calendar being August 13, B.C. 3114. As mentioned above, the most complete rendering of the Maya creation myth is recorded in the *Popol Vuh*. This text begins with a description of the actions of the first creators, Xpiyakok and Xmukane (First Father and First Mother), willing the world into existence through words. After forming the world—first centering it and then defining its four sides—they created the land sea and sky, and filled their creation with all manner of birds and animals. They were disappointed, however, to find that the animals were unable to pray, offer thanks or keep track of the days. A second creation resulted from this primordial couple's attempts to fashion such a being. However, as these beings were made of mud, they proved too soft, crumbling and dissolving. Another attempt using wood produced equally abortive results, as the wooden people were thoughtless and stiff, and unable to remember or praise their Creators. A flood was sent to destroy them, and with the third creation, they became monkeys to serve as reminders for subsequent generations (Freidel et al. 1993: 59-63, 107-108; Tedlock 1985). With the third creation the stories of the Hero Twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanke, are recounted. The adventures of the Twins highlight the importance of divination, cunning, and sacrifice to achieve mastery over death. The fourth creation resulted in the genesis of humanity, as the original creators discovered the correct materials—yellow and white corn. The new humans were perfect in every respect, immediately thanking their creators for their birth. The creators, however, were worried insofar as these new humans were equal to them, able to see clearly all the way to the four corners of creation. They therefore decided to adjust humanity a bit, limiting their sight to nearby things (Freidel et al. 1993: 108-112).

Freidel, Schele and Parker (1993: 43) indicate that the creation story outlined in the

Popol Vuh is, in all its essential aspects, the same as that created and recorded by the Maya of antiquity in the archaeological record. They go on to demonstrate the salience of key symbols and events encoded in this genesis story, as ordering the cosmos of the Maya through time. The creation myth and associated stories are shown to be recorded in the sky—in the constellations as understood by the Maya; a constant reminder of their origin. The important concept of 'centring the world' is marked with reference to ancient Maya architecture, as well as modern Maya ritual and sacred geography. The concept of souls, universal attributes of everything created, considered among modern Maya in human terms as dual—one invisible and eternal, one specific and related to an animal protector—is thought to have an ancient corollary. The Christian cross symbol is likewise directly connected to the ancient Maya concept of the World Tree, a ubiquitous symbol in the archaeological record (Freidel et al. 1993: 75, passim). This latter association is by no means novel, as ethnographers have been drawing this connection for several decades (cf. Vogt 1969).

One of the goals of Freidel, Schele and Parker's study was to explain how the Maya system of belief survived both the fall of the Classic Maya civilisation and the subsequent Spanish invasion, to persist largely intact after centuries of colonial rule. They convincingly demonstrate how this system was able to continue after the collapse of powerful Maya empires by showing how ingrained it was in everyday Maya life. Through daily activities, from planting corn to cooking meals to raising children, the creation stories of the Maya were transmitted and given life by all members of the society, elite and commoner. A similar mechanism, they argue, enabled further survival through years of Spanish rule. Anecdotal evidence drawn from personal experience with modern Maya as well as published ethnography punctuates their work and lends credibility to their claims. Another possibility, treated more obliquely, suggests that the interacting Maya and Christian systems shared many symbols and concepts that rendered a partial synthesis less painful than might have otherwise been the case. The example of the Christian cross as a concept with parallels in the Maya world tree is offered in this regard. Other parallels include the defeat of Death and rebirth through sacrifice and the concept of the triune God, which "would have made as much sense to the Maya farmer as to his king because all...Maya understood the fourfold nature of divinity" (Freidel et al. 1993: 50). These parallels aside, it is important to examine as well the areas where the beliefs systems most clearly diverged. In this regard, the Christian concept of good and evil—treated in chapter three—representing an eternal cosmic struggle, seems clearly foreign to the Maya system of belief sketched above. In order to better understand how and to what extent Maya belief and culture has survived to the present, the nature of Spanish colonialism and post-Independence politics and religion is briefly outlined presently.

Following the initial invasion and consolidation of Spanish rule in Guatemala, great changes in the political, economic and social landscape forever altered the face of the nation. Handy (1984) provides an excellent summary of this period. The indigenous population, as elsewhere in the New World, was immediately decimated by diseases against which they had no natural defence. The tremendous effect this devastation wrought among the Maya is described in the *Annals of the Kaqchikels*, another sacred text of the Maya written shortly after the Spanish invasion:

> It happened that during the twenty-fifth year the plague began, oh, my sons! First they became ill of a cough, they suffered from nose-bleeds and illnesses of the bladder. It was truly terrible, the number of dead there were in that period. The prince *Vakaki Ahmak* died then. Little by little heavy shadows and black night enveloped our fathers and grandfathers and us also, oh, my sons! when the plague raged...The people could not in any way control the sickness...Great was the stench of the dead. After our fathers and grandfathers succumbed, half the people fled to the fields. The dogs and vultures devoured the bodies. The mortality was terrible. Your grandfathers died, and with them died the son of the king and his brothers and kinsmen. So it was that we became orphans, oh, my sons! So we became when we were young. All of us were thus. We were born to die! (Recinos et al. 1953: 115-116)

This initial and subsequent pandemics reduced the population of Mesoamerica by 70 to 90 per cent in the first century after the initial invasion. The surviving population scattered, seeking refuge in isolated and marginal areas (Handy 1984: 19, 23; Lovell 1992: 140-172).

Their isolation was, however, short-lived, as the fledgling colonial economy found itself entirely dependent upon the indigenous population to serve as a work force in the generation of wealth. The infamous *reduciónes*, or resettlements, were designed to control and manage the scattered Maya population, and provide greater access to their labour. It was soon recognized that no wealth of any kind could be generated from the colony without the exploitation of indigenous labour—a situation which largely persists to the present. Beginning with the *encomienda* (commissions granted by the Crown to individuals, usually conquistadors, in recognition of their contribution to the colony and Spain, which included access to the indigenous population on the land) and followed by the *repartimiento* system (which required that virtually all Indians contribute labour as required by landowners), *reduciónes*(an initiative of the Catholic Church, which began in 1543, which amounted to the gathering and resettlement of the dispersed indigenous) and migrant labour on plantations, the Maya became the most important focus of colonial activities (Handy 1984: 21-23; Lovell 1992: 140-172; cf. Lutz and Lovell 1990).

Understandably, the indigenous population in the first century after the Spanish invasion suffered immeasurably. Ravaged by disease, oppressed and disenfranchised, forced together into new settlements, and marginalized as a exploited and powerless underclass, the survival of any form of Maya identity may seem miraculous. As will be seen shortly, this survival was aided in no small way by the type of community structure that was to develop under the direction of missionaries. With this form of social organization, village life was reinvigorated and a semblance of the old hierarchy reconstituted. The lack of parish priests in many communities resulted in a greater degree of religious freedom, with *cofradias* (or confraternities—religious brotherhoods devoted to the care of a particular saint), assuming control of local religious life. Community treasuries were set up, and local officials became much more active in defence of village interests. Rights to communal land were secured in many cases through appeal to the colonial legal system, and when peaceful means failed, rebellion was common. Fried et al. (1983: 24-25) record 28 separate rebellions occurring in the 18th and 19th centuries alone. Most of these were highly localized, and reflect the growing insular nature of the Maya community in Guatemala. Handy (1984: 33-34) sums up the effects of the Colonial period on the Maya as follows:

> The terror of the colonial regime left its mark on highland Indian communities. They were closed, suspicious, isolated places. Community structures were designed to exclude outsiders, to ensure a continuation of tradition through the selection of elders with a demonstrated attachment to that tradition. The village government acted mainly as an intermediary between the village and the colonial society, buffering the community from its demands. Perhaps most importantly, the colonial era created guarded

> individuals, seemingly docile, humble and outwardly obedient to authority—yet harbouring bitterness and distrust. The long colonial regime forged a society rife with deep fractures and laden with mistrust and resentment.

While the history outlined above echoes consensus among some scholars that external economic factors, namely the colony's dependence upon trade with Spain, largely determined the nature of the Guatemalan colonial system, Adriaan van Oss (1986) offers a different perspective, stressing the formative role of the Catholic Church during the colonial period. While initial conversion of the indigenous population accompanying the Spanish invasion was largely superficial and often brutal, subsequent efforts proved—to a degree at least—more focussed and successful. Monastic orders were responsible for the conversion of the indigenous groups in Guatemala's western highlands, the region with the highest Maya population. Franciscan, Dominican and Mercedarian priests were sent to the area, as the mendicant orders were considered far superior to secular clergy (those priests not belonging to a religious order) for the task. Faced with this rather daunting assignment, the initial attempts at conversion by these priests was admittedly impartial and syncretic. While the orders dedicated themselves to study of the indigenous languages, problems arose nonetheless in explaining Christian doctrine to the Maya. An example from the town of Sacapulas in 1770 provided by van Oss (1986: 18) illustrates this difficulty:

> The Dominican priest, having administered the sacrament of confirmation, was unable to make the participants understand that they should go to the sacristy to wash their foreheads. 'Tell them in their own language', advised the archbishop; to which the perplexed Dominican replied: 'I already told them in their language, but they don't understand it!'

Priests discovered early on that use of more participatory methods would aid in conversion. Music and singing became one of the core means to transmit Christian messages. This reportedly caught on quickly, and soon drew criticism, as van Oss (1986: 20) illustrates, quoting a 1565 decree which ordered a halt to the "'great excess and superfluity of music in churches', singling out the royal and bastard trumpets, clarinets, shawms, sackbuts, trombones, flutes, cornets, dulcimers, fifes, fiddles, and violins among other instruments 'commonly found in many monasteries...not only in large towns but also in the small'". Further in this vein, officials began criticizing the Church as exerting a corrupting influence upon the Maya, breeding a class of itinerant musicians who wandered freely from place to place and avoided paying tribute. Those Maya involved in local religious life were further characterized as corrupt, as is clear from the testimony of one official: "from childhood on they know all the women of the town and destroy the married ones as well as the maidens" (quoted in van Oss 1986: 20).

Early blending of Maya and Christian traditions is understandable insofar as the attempts at conversion initiated by the orders are considered to have been largely non-coercive. Working in Maya languages, corollaries were drawn between concepts expressing the divine in these tongues and their near-equivalent in Spanish-Christian concepts. Particularly as regards the saints' cults which were to proliferate, it is believed that figures from Maya religious tradition were paired off with Catholic saints, thus providing the Maya a good deal of continuity with their past. Also important in this regard is the fact that missionary friars invariably sought to convert first the elders and important officials of the Maya villages, through whom a more general conversion of the community followed. These individuals—presumably well-versed in the Maya system of belief—in turn became important figures in Church life, and thus retained their leadership role in the villages. This is not to imply that these priests actually sought such a syncretism, or that they considered the Maya belief system in some way equal to the Christian; rather, this method of conversion proved the only practical and efficient way of establishing Christianity—incomplete though it was—among the Maya. Van Oss (1986: 22) uses the example of the friar Francisco Ximénez—who discovered and translated the *Popol Vuh*—to illustrate this attitude:

> Francisco Ximénez...priest of Chichicastenango during the early years of the eighteenth century, feared for the souls of his parishioners. He suspected that their attendance at church—always more frequent on the days of their fiestas than on those of Catholic obligation—was due more to their love of 'drums and trumpets and the sound of bells', than to true persuasion. Ximénez was convinced that the Indians secretly conserved 'very pretty memories' of their earlier rites, and interpreted their Christianity as a 'transposition of names and titles behind the personages of the new creed'.

As the role of the orders gradually shifted from conversion of the indigenous population to the founding of towns and administration of parishes, many of the doctrinal issues which guided conversion took second place to more practical and immediate concerns. Funding of the parishes became a key issue, as the clergy were prohibited from tithing the indigenous converts. The Crown's prohibition of the tithe as applied to indigenous converts was intended to create an atmosphere of 'charity' into which the Catholic faith could be introduced. In order to make up for the loss of this principal source of revenue, the Crown raised tribute levels and gave a portion to the Church. In areas where the Ladino and Spanish populations were higher, the tithe proved a vital source of Church income, though bishops regularly expropriated these monies, little finding its way to actual parishes. While the indigenous population's exemption from the tithe was considered by the Crown to be only a temporary measure, the mendicant orders found they had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Knowing full well that the tithe benefited only the bishops and secular hierarchy, the orders saw no point in extending this to include the Maya (van Oss 1986: 80-84). As it was, parish priests, secular and regular (priests who have taken monastic vows), found ways around the apparent paucity of funds.

Various strategies were employed to secure funds at the community level. These include the 'ration': a contribution limited to indigenous parishioners consisting of an ostensibly voluntary donation of food to the priest, which in effect reached outlandish dimensions, rivalling the value of tribute payments; 'service': so-called voluntary labour secured by the priest from parishioners, likewise far exceeding basic needs; and most importantly, revenue generated from *cofradías* (van Oss 1986: 85-108; Lovell 1992: 111-113). *Cofradías* became very popular in a short period of time, to the point that by 1637 Church officials considered their number excessive, prohibiting (to no effect) the establishment of new ones. The local parish priest oversaw all *cofradía* operations, and collected fees from each one for services performed (saying masses for the saints, and officiating during festivities). Priests thus encouraged the formation of *cofradías*, particularly among the Maya who proved especially receptive to this institution, expending vast resources on ecclesiastical expenses, including the decoration of elaborate altars dedicated to each particular saint. Moreover, *cofradías* received funds from the diocese to help defray expenses associated with their activities. Despite this support, by and large the indigenous *cofradías*—in marked contrast to their less numerous Ladino counterparts—were rarely economically stable, the vast amount of revenue they generated siphoned off by parish priests, resulting in the bankruptcy and eventual dissolution of many such brotherhoods. Indeed, linguistic evidence from K'iche' throws a clearer light on what the Maya considered the *cofradías* to be: the K'iche' refer to *cofradías* as *chaq paţán* which translates literally as 'work service' (van Oss 1986: 89-92, 109-115).

These sources of revenue, combined with others, make a strong case for the argument that the Church, not the state or private enterprise, represented the biggest drain and largest influence upon Maya communities. It is worth mentioning that very little of this revenue was reinvested in the community in any meaningful way. Though required by law to provide schools and hospitals, clergy never even approached that task, keeping virtually all revenue generated for themselves, not even providing adequate funds for maintenance of Church buildings which soon fell into terrible states of disrepair. This situation led to a peculiar scene in the Guatemalan highlands, with dilapidated church buildings boasting lavish and ornate interiors (the work of *cofradías*) the norm. Payments made by indigenous parishioners to the Church represent by far the largest amount of revenue generated from this population by any colonial enterprise, state or private, and the clergy jealously guarded this situation. The situation was so dire for many villagers that entering into debt bondage with a Spanish landholder proved preferable to village life (van Oss 1986: 92-108, 181, 183; Lovell 1992: 117).

The colonial Church was not, however, wholly united. Deep divisions existed primarily between the secular and regular clergy, but also between the monastic orders themselves. These divisions helped shape the type of community structure to arise in the Guatemalan highlands, as well as the Ladino-dominated eastern lowlands and coastal plains.

Competition first arose between the Franciscan, Dominican and Mercedarian orders regarding territory, jealously fighting for and guarding possessions once obtained. These divisions are even recorded, albeit cryptically, in *The Annals of the Kaqchikels*, when the writer describes early evangelization:

> During the eighth month after the landslide there came to our church the Fathers of St. Dominic, Fray Pedro de Angulo and Fray Juan de Torres. They arrived from Mexico on the day 12 Batz (February 10, 1542). The Fathers of St. Dominic began our instruction. The Doctrine appeared in our language. Our fathers Fray Pedro and Fray Juan were the first who preached the word of God to us. Up to that time we did not know the word nor the commandments of God; we had lived in utter darkness. No one had preached the word of God to us. The Fathers of St. Francis, Father Alamicer, the Father Clerico, and the Fathers of St. Dominic were there also and preached to us. They translated the Doctrine into our tongue, and thus we were quickly instructed by them...*During this time there was a dispute between the Fathers of St. Dominic and those of St. Francis, who went away because of the ashes. Our Fathers of St. Dominic did not give the ashes here, and for this reason those of St. Francis went away* (Recinos et al. 1953: 134-135, emphasis added).

A more fundamental division existed between regular and secular clergy, the orders maintaining a monopoly over the entire western region of the colony, and its associated indigenous population, while the secular clergy controlled the eastern, Ladino-dominated region. These divisions accurately reflect historical and current ethnic divisions in Guatemala between the Ladino and indigenous population. Competition and divisiveness within the Church contributed greatly to the nature of community structure that was to emerge from the colonial period. The regular orders, fearful of the intrusion of secular clergy into their region, isolated themselves and their communities from outside interference. They continually used the 'language argument'—suggesting Maya communities could not be served by secular priests, as these priests could not speak indigenous tongues—to buttress their spiritual and economic monopoly in the region. While legally required to make their parishioners fluent in Spanish, no such effort was ever made—indigenous languages were indeed encouraged. Thus, the situation towards the end of the colonial period was similar to pre-conquest times: small self-sufficient communities tied together by language and customs, fiercely independent from other linguistic and cultural groups (van Oss 1986: 45-49, 69-78).

The eventual secularization of the Guatemalan diocese beginning in 1754, resulted in a near-total collapse of the power of the religious orders. The secular clergy sent to replace them, however, soon encountered difficulty in changing any of the local religious structures that had been put in place during previous centuries. The language barrier proved largely intractable, and in a general way the secular clergy soon settled into the same role as their regular predecessors: enriching themselves. George Lovell (1992:108-113) makes this point in his survey of the history of the Guatemala's Chuchumatán highlands, suggesting that while some priests may have indeed been dedicated to the service of their parishioners, others, especially during the 18th century when secularization occurred, were flagrant in the abuse of their power. That such abuses did not go unchallenged is clear from the vast number of complaints lodged by the Maya against their priests, the most common citing "...failure to reimburse for personal services, selling Indian livestock without native consent, overzealous collection of funds to celebrate mass or hear confession, and embezzlement of church finances...The last complaint was often lodged with respect to the clergy's use of assets belonging to the *cofradías*..." (Lovell 1992: 111, 113). Attempts at eliminating idolatry, establishing schools, and changing public morality all failed, largely due to the complete lack of interest and resistance among the indigenous population. Catholicism, and all the associated economic and political structures created by the religious orders in tandem with the Maya, was entrenched in strictly local terms and proved impervious to alteration. The greatest change in parish life occurred at the end of the colonial period, when Independence and the associated political infighting greatly reduced clerical power and influence throughout Guatemala. A vacuum was left in local political and religious life, as the total number of priests in Guatemala dropped from 453 in 1805 to 119 in 1872. This vacuum was filled by local militias, and the still-powerful *cofradías*, who largely determined the course of local religious practice in lieu of clerical representation (van Oss 1986: 137-152, 186-188).

These closed corporate communities, to use Eric Wolf's (1956; cf.1986) formulation, are an ideal type that came to typify, in one form or another, village life in this era. While it is unclear exactly when this form of community emerged—though connections with pre-Invasion *chinamit* social structure are evident (cf. Hill and Monaghan 1987)[1]—scholars generally agree on the characteristics that define it. Of key importance is the civil-religious hierarchy that developed, merging political and religious interests at the local level. A typical hierarchy consisted of a series of graded offices, on both the political and religious wings, in which service was mandatory for all males. The political wing included low-prestige offices, including 'police'—young men responsible for maintaining order, delivering messages, and cleaning the streets among other duties—moving upwards through a series of civil posts to the *alcalde primero* who held the most political power in the system. On the religious wing, service in *cofradías* was likewise ranked, within each *cofradía* as well as between them. A comparable set of low-level offices for young inexperienced men existed, with the *mayordomo primero* serving at the top of the hierarchy. Individuals were appointed to each post on a yearly basis, serving alternately in each wing of the hierarchy. Older men who had completed service at the top of the hierarchy were considered *principales*, and held veto power over decisions made by the *alcalde*. The *principales* held two of the three keys to the community chest, so that the *alcalde*—who held the third key—had to consult with them before spending community funds (McDowell 1974: 212-234).

Service in this system was costly, particularly as regards the sponsorship of titular fiestas and related celebrations, leading scholars to stress the wealth-leveling function of the hierarchy. While relative differences in wealth certainly existed, invariably the wealthiest villagers were obliged to serve at the higher levels of the hierarchy, and thus required to dispose of any excess wealth in the pubic and ritual sphere, effectively proscribing individual accumulation of wealth. This function is considered key in maintaining the insular structure of the community, as opportunities for investment outside the community or towards individualistic pursuits was curtailed. Land in these communities was held in common, and the *alcalde* was charged with the responsibility of distributing communal land to villagers. In short, this system served to buffer communities from each other and from the nation state. Villages were considered 'corporate' insofar as they maintained "a perpetuity of rights and membership" and closed as they "limit[ed] these privileges to insiders, and discourage[d] close participation of members on the social relations of the larger society" (Wolf 1957: 2; cf. McDowell 1974: 212-244). The closed corporate community is thus considered the vessel through which the belief system of the Classic Maya was maintained and transmitted, though its development was ironically influenced by the actions of early missionaries.

The Maya communities emerging from the colonial period into the 20th century were thus largely autonomous, closed and static entities, directing their own affairs with little intervention from the nation-state. While the Maya people's tenacity in maintaining their beliefs, language and culture (not to mention autonomous ideas concerning social organization, as evident in the *chinamit* social structure) certainly played a large role in the formation of these communities, the nature of the colonial system they encountered likewise contributed greatly. The role of the regular clergy in isolating these communities, encouraging the maintenance of indigenous languages and tolerating syncretic religious practices must be considered key. It is important to note that the monastic orders who held such a firm monopoly on the communities were not necessarily acting out of any sense of cultural relativism in the promotion and maintenance of indigenous identity, rather, it seems possible that the political interests of one sector (the monastic) of a rather internally divided clergy merged directly with the interests of the community, though tension still existed. That colonial agents—be they clergy, government officials or plantation owners—do not necessarily share a unified view of 'the colonized' is ably demonstrated by Nicholas Thomas (1994) in his work on Fiji. The same seems to be true of Mesoamerica, where the competing political interests of government officials, secular and regular clergy resulted in remarkably different treatments of the indigenous population. In this situation, it seems clear that the Maya belief system could indeed flourish and adapt. Attention to the clergy as agents in cultural transmission during the colonial period, through the syncretic structures they helped develop with the community, highlights what I consider to be a key mechanism which enabled Maya beliefs to survive and persist to the present. The breakdown of community structures in the 20th century, however, has meant that some Maya have been forced to define themselves in broader terms than the local village, which in many cases has become an highly factionalized and divisive place.

The Rise of Protestantism, *Acción Católica* and Inculturation and the Breakdowm of the Closed Corporate Community

Changes in Guatemala's political and economic situation in the years following independence eventually served to alter many of the community structures formed during the colonial period. These changes brought local communities into greater contact with national culture and politics, and opened them up to a new wave of evangelization, among both Protestants and Catholics. I argue that this incursion proved the greatest challenge to the integrity and survival of the Maya belief system since the Spanish invasion. The series of changes Maya communities have undergone have differed from region to region, though some general trends can be established. The shifting political and economic situation of the nation permitted the incursion of Protestantism into the Guatemalan countryside which in turn provoked the Catholic response of a general 're-evangelization', particularly depending on *Acción Católica* and the work of *catequistas* (converts to orthodox Catholicism). A current reaction to both these programs can be seen in the limited success of 'inculturation' theology practised by some Catholic priests, who seek a balance between Catholic orthodoxy and traditional Maya beliefs.

During the regime of Justo Rufino Barrios, the spiritual monopoly long held by the Catholic Church came under direct attack. Barrios viewed the Church as a barrier impeding the modernization of the nation, and worked hard to remove its power, expelling foreign priests, expropriating all Church land, and revoking the Church's status as a legally recognized entity. Coupled with this, Barrios encouraged the work of non-Catholic missionaries, who began arriving in the country in 1882. The first missions were the Presbyterians, the Central American Mission, the Church of the Nazarene, and the Friends Mission. By the first decade of this century, Protestant missions were firmly entrenched in the highlands and began a long struggle to convert the indigenous population, a struggle which would not pay off for many decades. Early Protestant missionaries made extensive use of the village market system to attract followers, taking on Maya assistants to aid in proselytization efforts. Each conversion was embraced with vigour, representing a potential around which more converts could be secured. Early congregations were very small, meeting in an individual convert's home, where they were instructed in the faith and given support lest their spiritual fervour should wane. With subsequent generations of missionaries, the aim shifted somewhat to deal with the maintenance of these small congregations, with the establishment of Bible-training institutes and seminaries. Revivals and retreats were organized on a large scale, funded by a endless flow of donations from North American parent churches (Annis 1987: 76-78).

While the percentage of Protestants in Guatemala from the mid 1940s and immediately beyond was rather small, it was a very active population and served to fundamentally alter the political and religious life in many local communities. It was not until the mid-1970s that the percentage of Protestants began to increase significantly. Annis (1987: 79) lists three external events that contributed to the meteoric rise in conversion to these sects this the late 1970s and early 1980s:

> First, the earthquake of 1976 (which killed 20,000 and injured another 100,000 people) caused massive physical dislocation in the highlands...The physical fracturing of villages, the primary units of Indian cultural integration and economic activity, dramatically disoriented rural life and increased the number of "dispossessed peasants"...At the same time, it provided the missionaries with an opportunity to enter new communities, to preach on God's wrath, and to build new churches. Second, the war that brutally escalated during the Lucas García regime caused another kind of dislocation. Indians were the chief victims of the widening violence that for many became a maelstrom. The "hot" apocalyptic religion offered by the Protestants—a gospel of tears, shouting, and speaking in tongues—was sustaining and seemingly appropriate for the times. And third, during the tumultuous Ríos Montt regime...Protestantism was simply safer than Catholicism.

By the 1990s, Protestants were considered to make up at least 35% of the nation's population, with a strong base in indigenous communities (Wilson 1995: 169). Anticipating the threat of Protestant growth, the Catholic Church as early as the 1940s began a general re-evangelization of the highlands, providing parish priests to communities for the first time in many decades. To aid in proselytization, *Acción Católica*, or Catholic Action, was formed in 1942. This is a lay organization, and was formed to fulfill three functions: to assume control over the everyday administrative duties of the local church; to attract new converts (from Protestant congregations as well as traditionalists); and to establish and direct social service programs (McDowell 1974: 290). The first arena of religious conflict during this period was not between Catholics and Protestants, rather between the new Catholic priests (together with *Acción Católica*) and the *costumbristas*, or leaders of the traditional religious hierarchy. Numerous studies document the conflict that arose between these groups, and the outcome in each case varies (cf. Mendelson 1957, 1965; Nash 1958; McDowell 1974; Falla 1978; Warren 1978; Brintnall 1979). In chapter three I examine two of the most interesting cases, in Santiago Atitlán and Cantel, which are particularly relevant as both these towns maintain shrines to San Simón (or Maximón, a variant discussed below), and this particular tradition figured prominently in the disputes which ensued.

In the years following the introduction of *Acción Católica*, religious division became a mainstay of Highland communities. By the end of the 1960s, however, *Acción Católica* began to alter the nature of its program. Motivated by the reforms of the Vatican Council II in 1965, and subsequent Episcopal conferences in Medellín, Colombia and Puebla, Mexico, *Acción Católica* began to stress issues of human rights. While maintaining its commitment to a more orthodox Catholicism, development issues often went hand in hand—the establishment of co-operatives, health clinics, schools and literacy programs, and the registration and protection of land were a few of the issues treated by priests and *catequistas* (Wilson 1995: 172-177). The effects of these projects varied from region to region, though are generally considered to have aided in the establishment of a sentiment of activism among the Maya. While not overtly political, the Catholic Church began to be identified with the guerrilla movement in the highlands. This was largely due to the Church's growing concern with the plight of the poor, and the growth of the theology of liberation. When the government's brutal counter-insurgency program of the late 1970s and early 1980s unleashed its wrath on the highlands, the Catholic Church, and other development-oriented organizations, became prime targets, as Annis (1987: 6) explains:

> Because few people spoke overtly of politics in the highlands (and lived long), the secular developmentalist activities of the Church took on subtle shades of meaning. The army was right to treat suspiciously "innocent" claims such as "All we're doing here is trying to organize our marketing coop." Though a Church-organized and, say, an AID organized coop were doing essentially the same thing, they could be doing so within very different frames of political reference. By the end of the 1970s, the Guatemalan blend

> of liberationist theology and developmentalism implied a social order in which the army, the government, and the wealthy were on one side of the fence, and the people on the other...It is for this reason, from the army's point of view, the enemy became not just the guerrillas and their civilian supporters but, eventually, social organization itself. The seemingly inexplicable onslaughts against defenseless villages made a kind of sense. There *were* endless enemies. Because the village itself was such a tangled human web—bound by blood ties, a past, its ideologies, and colored by the Church, the Christian Democrats, and even the Peace Corps—it appeared treacherous and potentially threatening. Even innocuous cooperatives, above-ground political parties, and village self-help committees looked suspect and were vaguely guilty by association.

Thus, the legacy of religious factionalism in highland communities gave way under the greater weight of political terror. The few small steps made by development-oriented priests, *catequistas* and others ground to a halt, as local leaders of any stripe were routinely executed or 'disappeared'. As mentioned earlier, it is during this period that Protestantism received its greatest number of converts, as it was simply unsafe to be Catholic. The president during the bloodiest days of counter-insurgency, Ríos Montt, was himself a fervent born-again Christian, and a member of an obscure fundamentalist church called 'El Verbo'. He viewed the war against the guerrilla in biblical terms, and considered himself Guatemala's deliverer. Guatemalans were, to Ríos Montt "the chosen people of the New Testament...the new Israelites of Central America" (quoted in Annis 1987: 4). It was not until the violence began to die down, with talk of peace on government and guerrilla agendas in the 1990s, that grassroots organizations re-emerged and gained strength. While the nature of these organizations, which have coalesced into a more general pan-Maya movement, will be discussed in chapter two, local religious life took on a new face as well, with the introduction of inculturation theology in some communities, considered presently.

In recent years, the focus of the Church in Guatemala has shifted, in a limited way, away from orthodox evangelization of the indigenous population to a program termed 'inculturation'[2]. In short, this focus amounts to a re-evaluation of traditional beliefs in the hopes of establishing inter-religious dialogue between the Church and traditionalists, with the aim of fostering a local variety of Catholicism more in tune with the history and traditions of the community. Inculturation has become a strong movement in the Catholic Church worldwide, and in some Protestant sects as well. Ostensibly, it deals directly with the criticisms relating to the imperialistic nature of evangelism, and seeks to strike a balance between the universal faith and the reality of local worship. While in many ways this strategy represents something of a reversal of the program of *Acción Católica* in the 1950s, its roots may be traced to the post-Vatican II emphasis on the rights of the poor, and the subsequent valuation of oppressed peoples and cultures. I offer below a brief overview of the inculturation strategies of two Catholic priests.

In the case of the Dominican Fernando Suazo, who works in the Q'eqchi' community of Rabinal in the department of Baja Verapaz, the program of inculturation he has followed has amounted to a personal journey into the world of Maya spirituality, which has convinced him of the intrinsic value of local beliefs and practices. Writing about his experiences in a Dominican theological journal, he is quick to point out that the local spirituality in Rabinal can serve as an example for Westerners, as core truths found in the Gospel message are lived daily by members of the community. He stresses that the world of the Rabinaleños is imbued with mystery, that Western rationalism has not made incursions into the local belief system. This worldview, for Suazo, stresses the transcendence of God in virtually all areas of daily life. The interplay of good and evil is a hallmark of the local spirituality, where evil is thought to be embodied in a very real, palpable presence. People are particularly susceptible to the effects of evil spirits when they stop behaving according to traditional morality, which reflects God's will[3]. God is omnipresent, the most beautiful and complete manifestation of divinity thought to be embodied in the earth itself, which is considered highly sacred and the source of all life. A pantheon of spiritual beings, including saints as well as ancestors, provide the most direct access to divine intervention in daily affairs, and these are all treated with the utmost respect and deference. The key element in the local spirituality, as described by Suazo, is the maintenance of harmony in one's relations to the world of spirits as well as the community. He contrasts Western preoccupations with perfection as the human ideal to the concern in Rabinal towards accepting one's fate and seeking to maintain a balance in accordance with divine will. Suazo goes on to establish a critique of Western culture and religiosity based on what he feels is the superior example provided by Maya spirituality (Suazo 1995: 93-108).

Throughout his exposition, Suazo repeatedly stresses the need for systemic change to alleviate poverty and social injustice. The violence that racked Rabinal in the early 1980s is cited as an example of the inhumanity that seems well ingrained in the modern nation state and economic system. Western culture is criticized for its repression of such a beautiful and in many ways superior system of belief and worship exemplified in Maya communities. While Suazo seems to engage in a kind of inter-religious dialogue with his critique of Western culture and religion from a Maya perspective, he is reticent to discuss the ways in which Western culture, particularly Christianity, may inform Maya culture. He does point out a few areas of Maya spirituality which seem to have parallels in Christian thought, including the close physical relationship Maya maintain with the earth—considered the primordial mother—which for Suazo seems to echo what he feels to be the central message of the New Testament: the close, fatherly relationship which exists between God and his Son, and by extension all humanity. More generally, the Maya seem to live a more spiritual life than that of most Westerners, which speaks of a closer connection to God. Suazo, indeed, seems loath to suggest any further changes to present day Maya spirituality, as it seems to express a legitimate and valid alternate form of worship. He goes as far as to suggest that translation of the Bible into Q'eqchi' is hindered by the absence of corresponding concepts expressing extreme anger and vengeance in that language. Indeed, the notion of hell—as a place of eternal suffering and evil with no chance for redemption— is completely foreign to Q'eqchi' belief and experience (Suazo 1995: 98). Nonetheless, Suazo's role in the community is that of a Catholic priest, and while he does not treat the conflict that inevitably arises between these two spiritualities, we must assume that conflict does indeed occur. The following example sheds greater light on some of the problems attendant in the inculturation program.

Padre Tomás García is a well-loved and respected priest, currently stationed in Cantel. I first heard of Padre Tomás early on in my fieldwork, during interviews with Maya religious specialists who had no end of good things to say of him. He was considered very different from other priests, as he encouraged Maya spirituality and was himself, according to some, a Maya priest as well as a Catholic priest. I was not disappointed when I was finally able to meet with him, as he proved gracious and forthcoming during our interview, fully living up to his reputation. Padre Tomás told me of how he first became involved with the Maya, and later how this involvement altered his own worldview. While ordained as a priest some 30 years ago, he never received the chance to work directly with an indigenous community until some 9 years following his ordination. As he himself is indigenous, this was always one of his main goals. His first experience with a Maya community was in San Andrés Xecul, department of Totonicapán, where he served as parish priest for 11 years beginning in the late 1970s.

When he first came to San Andrés Xecul, he made a conscious decision to break down some of the barriers that traditionally placed the priest on a higher level than his parishioners. To this end, he, his sister and her two children, made an effort to emulate the lifestyle of the average villager. They cooked their meals in the traditional manner, using a small fire with three hearth stones on the floor of the kitchen, and ate traditional meals (tortillas and beans the staple). Their home was very modest with little in the way of furnishings, and approached the level of an average household in the community. This situation proved advantageous in gaining the trust of parishioners, who, upon visiting his home, felt immediately at ease. At the outset Padre Tomás was unsure of the value of Maya spirituality, having been taught through his orthodox education that traditional rites and beliefs were paganistic. While initially suspicious of these beliefs, upon living in such intimate contact with Xeculeños his opinion began to shift. He began to realize that the worldview of his parishioners was certainly distinct from orthodox Christianity, but not necessarily evil or paganistic. He began to take seriously the rituals and customs of the *cofradías* and *costumbristas*, eventually encouraging them to continue with their customs and expand their authority.

One of the first projects Padre Tomás helped direct in collaboration with the *cofradías*, was the repainting of the church facade. Traditionally, colonial churches in Guatemala are a standard white, with a more or less elaborate facade, some possessing a greater degree of relief sculptures than others. The church in San Andrés Xecul boasts one of the most elaborate facades I have seen, with all manner of statuary and adornment covering its entire face. Padre Tomás encouraged the *cofradías* to paint their church in traditional colours, to make it something unique and individualized. They managed to do exactly that, and at present their church has become something of a tourist attraction in the region—promoted strongly by the national tourist commission, INGUAT[4]—visitors drawn by the remarkable kaleidoscope of yellows, reds, blues, and greens that seem to give life to the statuary and relief carvings. While the church is the most tangible physical testament to Padre Tomás' legacy in the town, his efforts went far beyond this one project. Concern with the recuperation of indigenous language guided many of his efforts, and he began saying masses in K'iche'. This extended to use of traditional music, the marimba, and the translation of hymns into K'iche'. Through it all, traditional beliefs regarding the ancestors and mountain spirits were encouraged, as were fiestas, devotion to the saints and virtually all other aspects of local tradition.

For Padre Tomás, his mission became more clearly defined as the search for the 'Indian face of Christ' within the community. He realized the error in assuming that a single, European version of Christianity represented the universal truth. Through his experience in San Andrés Xecul, he came to view the manifestation of Christ in a wholly different medium than that of orthodox Catholicism. In his own words, he "seeks to discover the Indian face of God. The Maya face of God in this case. Because the face of God that we've been presented with is the European. It's white. It gives me such joy when I see statues of a black Christ...and why not us? Christ is not only for one culture." The Maya face of God is manifested in the extant spirituality of the community. Padre Tomás sees nothing inherently evil in practices honouring the ancestors, mountain and nature spirits, as well as the saints. These, to him, are good things, and reveal that "God was there before the arrival of the *catequistas*, before the arrival of the priests. God was already there...through these planting and harvest rituals, fiestas, and every event in the life of the Maya...It's a thing of beauty." It is considered a great error that early missionaries never recognized the value of Maya spirituality, and equated European culture with Christianity. It is this error that Padre Tomás seeks to address. He stresses that his role is not to change the culture, or even alter it. Rather it is a process of discovery and validation of traditional spirituality, insofar as it gives a new voice to the Christian message.

Another important lesson Padre Tomás received during his tenure in San Andrés Xecul, was the depth of poverty and oppression suffered by his parishioners. He was there during the height of the violence of the early 1980s, and was forced to flee to Mexico when his name appeared on a government black list. While he still wonders why he was targeted, one reason he has come up with is what was a rather unfortunate coincidence involving the guerrilla. Padre Tomás hosted a daily radio program, entitled '*Despertamos*' or 'We Awaken', which ended with the following quotation from the *Popol Vuh*: 'That they all rise up, no one remains behind'. The guerrilla during this time began using the same slogan, and, according to Padre Tomás, "this complicated my life incredibly...those guerrillas." While admitting that he shares some views with the guerrilla, as regards social justice and poverty, he found it unfortunate that any talk of reform resulted in accusations of subversion. He expressed hope, however, that the current situation in Guatemala will offer some potential for true change. He admires the work of Maya intellectuals and politicians who are currently seeking an end to the injustice they have endured, though stressed that spirituality must take a central role in revitalization.

By assuming such an open-minded perspective, Padre Tomás is able to dispense with the core issue raised by missiologists and theologians in considering inculturation, namely, how to judge a 'good' inculturation from heresy. In many ways his situation is enviable. Through the course of several centuries, Maya communities have absorbed—or appropriated and reinterpreted—a great deal of Catholicism, and are very familiar with basic biblical themes. Padre Tomás does not have to start from scratch in introducing Christian messages. As it is, his task at present does not consist in any way of finding clever new ways to translate the Gospel message into the local idiom. Rather, he assumes the message is already there, that it has been there for millennia, and must now simply be given legitimacy and promoted. Thus, for Padre Tomás, as with Suazo, his task involves more a dialogue with local traditions which establishes the intrinsic value of extant belief. It must be noted that this value is judged in Christian terms, and correspondences between the Gospel message and local belief are particularly valued. However, in areas where conflict arises, a blind eye is turned. This attitude is certainly more respectful than previous efforts, most notably by *catequistas*, to seek out and eradicate conflicting beliefs.

It appears that the changes in the structure of the closed corporate community in Guatemala through the course of this century have made the field of religious belief and affiliation much more contested and problematic than may have been the case previously. The relative success of any new religious program is inevitably challenged by rival groups. This was the case with the rise of Protestantism, which offered a clear challenge to the near monopoly of *costumbristas* over local religious belief and practice. A more effective challenge was later raised through the efforts of *Acción Católica*, which came to dominate religious life in many communities at the expense of the traditionalists. The current program of inculturation has likewise not gone unchallenged. Besides the lack of concrete official support for this program, and resistance from *catequistas*, inculturation has been challenged recently by young Maya priests—part of the more general pan-Maya movement—who wish to purge all traces of Christianity from their spirituality. They thus view inculturation with suspicion, representing a new form of appropriation of a tradition they feel is legitimately theirs. That this is the situation at present reflects the many changes that have been wrought in community structures, resulting in both increased factionalism and a more general openness in village life in many cases at present. Recognition of these changes necessitates a re-examination of the closed corporate community model, outlined above, in order to determine to what extent this may be considered the most appropriate way to characterize present day Maya reality and identity.

The model of the closed corporate peasant community was forwarded in 1957 by Eric Wolf as part of an anthropological project aimed at the understanding and explanation of certain recurrent features exhibited by societies in different areas of the world. He compared communities in Central Java and Mesoamerica in the development of his thesis that this community configuration is likely to be found in areas where "the dualization of society into a dominant entrepreneurial sector and a dominated sector of native peasants [has occurred]" (Wolf 1957: 8). Peasants in this discussion are defined as "agricultural producer[s] in effective control of land, who [carry] on agriculture as a means of livelihood, not as a business for profit" (Wolf 1957: 1). The traits these communities were said to exhibit include the maintenance of "a body of rights to possessions, such as land", the exertion of pressure on members to redistribute and equalize wealth and surpluses (through a 'high-cost' religious system, for example), and the limitation of membership within the community combined with a general discouraging of interaction with the larger society (Wolf 1957: 2). These communities are thus considered 'closed' (membership and benefits thereof are controlled as is contact with external forces) and 'corporate' (the rights, obligations and memberships are maintained as inalienable by the self-identified group).

While the terms and definitions themselves have been criticized, or at least qualified by other researchers (cf. Smith 1990) and Wolf himself (1986), the main thrust of his approach lies in the historical context in which he situates these communities. This context serves to explain in some way why such communities formed, and thus offer material for the establishment of a 'cultural law' that might predict the circumstances under which these communities may emerge. The closed corporate community in Mesoamerica is considered by Wolf "a creature of the Spanish Conquest...[as] thoroughgoing changes [named as population loss and colonial resettlement] divide the post-Hispanic community from its pre-conquest predecessor" (1957: 7)[5]. Beyond the fact of colonization (which occurred in many areas without the formation of this type of community configuration), the conquerors must depend on peasant labour for market production, without converting the peasantry into a permanent, full-time workforce. Thus, some land must be left in the hands of the peasants, but not enough to make them self-sufficient (1957: 9). The resulting community is said to strongly emphasize land, which is a limited resource, and rely upon a highly labour-intensive form of agricultural technology. In both administration and economy, responsibilities are placed to the greatest degree at the level of the community, and only secondarily upon the individual (1957: 11). Consequently, Wolf argues that while these external forces give shape these communities, their "internal function...is to equalize the life chances and life risks of its members" (1957: 12).

Upon establishing this closed—seemingly homeostatic—system, Wolf identifies the factors which put the greatest stress upon it, and which ultimately lead to its demise. These include the great reliance upon land, and the corresponding scarcity of that resource, and the impossibility of avoiding polarizing disparities in wealth within the community. The first factor leads to the encouragement of emigration and the foundation of daughter villages when stress on land becomes particularly high due to population growth. This solution can only be successful, however, when emigrants are able to find employment elsewhere or land is available for these new villages (1957: 12-13). The second factor suggests that despite efforts to equalize wealth, some families and individuals will experience greater poverty—due to crop failure, illness, larger than average family size etc.—and others will be richer—due to their specialized roles as community leaders or storekeepers for example. The end result is an increasing reliance of the poorest upon the richest, and the reduction of the effectiveness of the communal structures, until the closed corporate community "comes to represent a hollow shell or is swept aside entirely" (1957: 14).

Wolf's criticism of cultural essentialism has led to a gradual abandonment of that tradition (Wilson 1995: 7). The approach most common in Guatemalan scholarship over the past few decades has been that referred to by Watanabe (1992) as historical contextualism or 'historicism'. Extreme examples from this tradition can be found in Marxist and other critical thought that suggests the closed corporate community is wholly a product of (and maintained by) an exploitative colonial regime. The internal structure of the community is thought by such critics to serve only to obscure the reality of oppression and deflect criticism from the true oppressor, the state, to community officials. The Guatemalan historian, Martínez Peláez (1994: 595-596) is a strong proponent of this view, with his assertion that the Indian is entirely a product of the conquest and colonial period:

> ...the explanation of the Indian consists in showing how the conquest and the colonial regime transformed the prehistoric natives into Indians. The dislocation of the Indian's own culture occurred with the objective of making them complacent in the dismantling of the economic and social organizations of their forbears and their replacement with the new functions that came to place the natives within the colonial structure...The cultural characteristics that would come to typify them later on were the consequence of the pressures suffered by the class of enslaved natives in the colonial structure, of the functions disseminated by the slaves in said structure, and also, of course, of the forms of resistance created by the slave oppressed in this structure of which he formed a part.[6]

The Indian—or the people who call themselves 'Maya' presently—is thus considered not to have existed, as such, before conquest, at which time 'natives' existed. The native was transformed into the Indian through colonial processes, and the Indian, in Guatemala at least, is thought to form a distinct and exploited class. Wolf's own ideas seem to be echoed here, though more radically. More generally, Wolf's approach has tended to reinforce the community as the locus for study in Mesoamerica, even if external forces are viewed as salient. Wolf's materialist and relationist view underlies much scholarship on diverse themes in Mesoamerican community life, including religion and economy (Annis 1987), identity (Warren 1978), and state-community relations (Smith 1990). While much of this work is of high quality, the ability to explain adequately the coalescence of a truly nationalistic and—from a certain perspective—revolutionary attitude cutting across community lines seems limited with a materialist approach. Agency on the part of community members is limited, as they are seen primarily as effected by community level forces, while the community itself is determined by external forces. In my examination of pan-Mayanism in chapter two, I argue that while the community may provide a primordial sense of identity for many Maya, the shared traits of language, dress, and 'culture' in general which carry over between villages, represent a potential around which a broader sense of the Maya as a distinct people, a nation perhaps, can be articulated. Prior to examining this pan-Maya movement, and the associated revitalization of Maya spirituality, I provide a brief introduction to the cult of San Simón and how this tradition is linked to the issues introduced above.

San Simón: an Overview

San Simón is many things to many people. Among other interpretations, he has been classified as a representation of Judas Iscariot, of Pedro de Alvarado (the conqueror of Guatemala), of Saint Peter, of a Maya folk hero Francisco Soguel, of an ancient Maya deity— *Mam*—and even of a 19th century French philosopher, Count Henri de Rouvroy de

Saint-Simon[7]. He may be associated in some way with other saints, particularly Saint Jude, and often a local saint. People's attitudes towards this image run the gamut from sheer devotion to loathing and fear. Tourists from Europe and North America regularly pay to visit his shrines, drawn by descriptions offered in guidebooks and their insatiable appetite for the

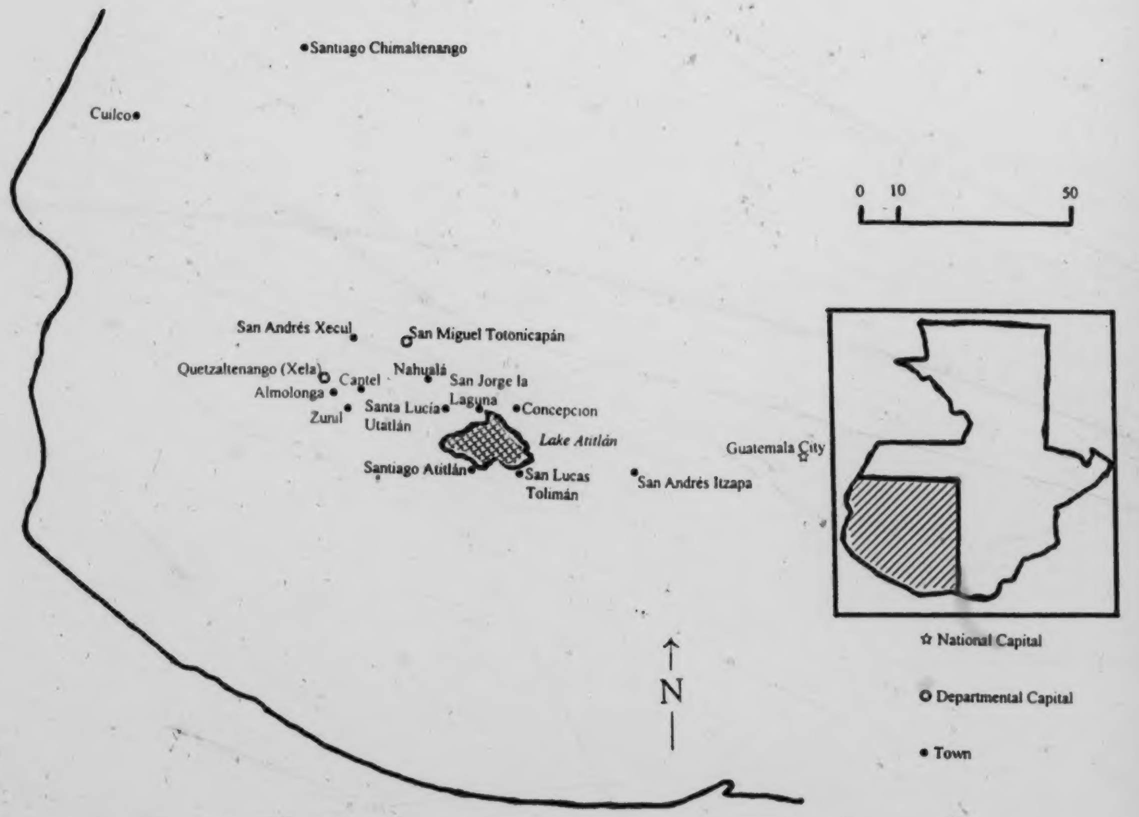
[redacted]

Plate 1: San Simon Paraphernalia for sale in San Andrés Itzapa.
Note the images of Buddah, Rey San Pascual (the crowned skeleton, Saint Jude (the statue in the centre, appears with an 'L'-shaped club) and the picture of Don Diego (at the top centre-left, note the large sombrero).

exotic. His images and paraphernalia of all description are sold in candleshops right alongside images of Jesus, Mary, Saint Jude and other official saints, as well as Buddha, Santería deities and other popular saints including Don Diego and Rey San Pascual[8]. Connections with satanic practices are not unheard of, as I encountered among this paraphernalia a satanic tract with instructions for performing love magic through the ceremonial use of a cigar, invoking Lucifer (cf. Chevalier 1982: 377-406). He is thus censored as an idol by the official voice of the Catholic Church, while some local parishes have learned to tolerate him, nonetheless remaining suspicious. San Simón is the focus of a diverse range of religious activity cutting across ethnic and class lines in the country, though each individual seems to bring his or her own personal understanding of the saint to worship or supplication. Thus, lacking any straightforward, official interpretation, San Simón is ambiguity personified. To begin to unravel this paradox, some description of the saint, his possible origins, the nature of religious activity he inspires, and the types of followers he attracts, should prove useful.

San Simón appears in a variety of guises, the most famous and conventional being a mustached youngish man, eyes turned to heaven, bedecked in a dark suit (complete with tie and dress shoes) and large brimmed hat. He holds a staff in his right hand, the left open to accept tribute (monetary or other), or holding a bag full of money. Variations have San Simón wearing a military uniform, ethnic dress, a leather bomber jacket or doctor's clothing, among other possibilities, with the added accessory of sunglasses and gloves often seen. In all cases, his clothing is donated by devotees, with *cofradías* often maintaining a large wardrobe to store his vestments. Shrines to his image can be found throughout highland

Guatemala (some evidence suggests the cult has branches in Mexico as well). I received estimates of up to 30 or more distinct shrines to San Simón in Guatemala, the majority of which remained undocumented during the period of my research. I visited seven different shrines, three of which are well-known, four of which are less visited and unknown to the majority of Guatemalans and tourists.[9]


Santiago Chimaltenango
Cuilco
0 10 50
San Andrés Xecul
San Miguel Totonicapán
Quetzaltenango (Xela)
Cantel
Nahualá
San Jorge la Laguna
Almolonga
Zunil
Santa Lucía Utatlán
Concepcion
Lake Atitlán
Guatemala City
Santiago Atitlán
San Lucas Tolimán
San Andrés Itzapa
N
☆ National Capital
○ Departmental Capital
● Town

Map: Highland Guatemala.
Included are cities and towns which reportedly maintain shrines to San Simón. Adapted from Bricker (1981: 79).

While each of these shrines exhibit certain distinct features, some over-arching characteristics describe San Simón in popular and, to an extent, anthropological understandings. In discussing this cult, the vast majority of people with whom I consulted concurred in attributing great miraculous powers to the saint, particularly stressing his efficacy in securing wealth and in providing protection. His powers in attracting love and curing illness are likewise noted. Pamphlets sold at his shrines describe the significance of each of the coloured candles which are lit before his image, confirming these interpretations.[10] According to these tracts, red candles are good for securing love, faith and goodwill; yellow provide protection for adults; green ensure prosperity in business; blue secure luck and employment; pink are for health and hopes; black can be used against enemies, jealousy and to undo witchcraft; purple work to suppress vices and evil thoughts; light blue are good for money, happiness, travels and study; and white provide protection for children. Thus, no less than six of the nine colours used treat in some way wealth and protection. It is also admitted, however, that San Simón does not limit his services to those individuals seeking good things, as he is also thought to be called upon by evil people and witches to do their bidding. These latter individuals, however, are believed to pay a huge price for receiving such favours, having to sacrifice a great deal—perhaps their lives or those of loved ones—in return for the saint's intervention. San Simón thus takes on a Faustian dimension in such deals, which are generally considered to be sealed in private amidst great secrecy. This association with evil has led many to condemn the cult as paganistic, or even satanistic, leading those directly associated with San Simón to assume a highly defensive attitude, often denying or in some other way deflecting charges of malevolence directed towards their saint.

San Simón is generally maintained by a *cofradía* which can assume one of two forms: a 'traditional' *cofradía*, endorsed and supported at least tacitly by the local church; or an independent *sociedad* or *comité* in cases where the local church is hostile towards San Simón. The majority of shrines I visited fell into the latter category, with only two functioning—albeit uneasily—under the auspices of the Catholic Church. In the case of *sociedades*, there has been a tendency in some instances to forego the traditional annual circulation of the saint between *cofrades*, with San Simón instead remaining in a single home for many years. In one case, that of San Andrés Itzapa, San Simón has an entire large chapel

Plate 2: San Simón's shrine in San Andrés Itzapa
Note the ceremonial fire in the foreground (the importance of the fire to Maya spirituality is discussed in chapter two).

dedicated in his name and managed by the *sociedad*, which has had the same president for many years (cf. Sanchiz 1993: 260; Pellecer 1973: 43). In another instance, that of San Andrés Xecul, San Simón has remained in the home of a single *cofrade* for three years, though this *cofrade* stressed that the reason for this was that the other *cofrades* and people in general were very content with the service he had provided and did not think that San Simón could be as well served in another location. In Zunil the saint circulates yearly between *cofrades*, who consider the reception of San Simón to be an important reward long due after years of *cofradía* service—both in San Simón's *cofradía*, 'Las Animas', and in other 'official' Church-approved *cofradías*, five years service in which is a prerequisite to service in Las Animas[11]. Unlike other *cofradías*, there is often great competition to serve in San Simón's sodality, for while service entails a large expenditure in the saint's name and in some cases for community projects, the potential for profit is great. This 'profit motive' has led to criticism in some instances when the Saint has remained in the care of a single *cofrade* for several years, as was the case in San Andrés Itzapa in the early 1970s (Pellecer 1973: 43). I recorded similar criticism of this society in Itzapa, which was described as being in the hands of a few families whose motives were considered to be founded firmly in greed as opposed to any kind of sincere religious devotion.

The forms of devotion San Simón receives vary to some extent, ranging from simple prayers supplemented with offerings of candles, cigarettes and liquor, to more elaborate or specific rituals, some clearly influenced by spiritualism, others requiring the services of a *sacerdote maya* or similar specialist, who may perform more complex prayers and cleansing ceremonies using special herbs and alcohol. Generally speaking, the average believer's

Plate 3: Ceremonies and prayers for Zunil's San Simón.
Note the shaman (far right) performing a cleansing ceremony with herbs, as well as the offerings of liquor, flowers, candles and firecrackers (on San Simón's feet).

relation to San Simón is comparable partially at least with the standard Latin American folk Catholic notion of a *promesa* or *manda*, whereby a saint performs specific services and miracles in return for devotion and offerings. Two major differences, however, distinguish San Simón from other orthodox and popular saints in this regard. The latter, as Gudeman (1988: 22-23) reports, are thought to act as mediators between the supplicant and God, who is ultimately responsible for any miracle. Thus, the request must be compatible with the will of God. Likewise, the nature of the *promesa* is such that payment on behalf of the supplicant only occurs when the miracle has been received: it is not considered possible to 'bribe' the saint with money or elaborate offerings prior to receiving the miracle. A typical *promesa* to a saint involves a promised devotion, pilgrimage or payment of some kind to be fulfilled after a miracle is received. Any offerings made prior to receiving a miracle are considered mere testament to the faith of the supplicant, and are not efficacious in influencing the outcome of the request. In both aspects, San Simón differs, insofar as requests clearly contrary to God's will may be made of the saint, who can be swayed by offerings made before any tangible results are obtained. In short, San Simón is much more opportunistic than other saints, official or popular, and will take on all manner of requests providing the price is right. Watanabe (1990: 137) describes a somewhat similar scenario for other Mesoamerican saints, insofar as these are generally considered to possess their own personal powers, independent from God's will and grace. His suggestion that these saints are often considered *abogados*—lawyers or advocates—interceding on their 'client's' behalf before God, relates strongly to certain perceptions regarding San Simón who often carries the denomination '*abogado*'.

San Simón differs as well from those Latin American saints which are considered "...exemplars of moral behavior...[serving] as models for ideal behavior for villagers" (Ingham 1986: 99). In contrast, San Simón is generally considered to possess a combination of virtues and vices that place him on a more equal footing with his devotees. His predilection for alcohol and tobacco is one example of a vice, though his limitless generosity is clearly considered virtuous. Thus, for many in actual practise, San Simón is called upon to respond to many of the concrete, profane and otherwise 'trivial' desires, which—no matter how important to the individual supplicant—are not considered appropriate to address to the official saints. In return for performing this myriad of miracles, large and small, informants concurred that San Simón demands respect and devotion over the long term: punishment is inevitable for those who make use of the saint for a specific need, then forget about him or fail to properly thank him. I recorded many stories of such punishment, and it was repeatedly stressed that failure to take San Simón seriously inevitably resulted in disaster.

Pellecer (1973: 68) records a different perception as regards how San Simón prefers to be treated, which places him in clear opposition to official saints. According to one of his informants, San Simón is thought to abhor altars, wishing instead to remain on the dirt floor preferably in a dark corner with his cigarettes, candles and alcohol. Moreover, he is happiest when treated poorly and harbours no special appreciation towards those who care for him. This informant considered San Simón the patron of drunks and prostitutes, suggesting that the image actually visits cantinas and brothels during the evening when his caretakers are asleep. Tarn and Pretchel (1986: 183) in their discussion of Atitlán's Maximón likewise report on the popularity of the image with prostitutes in Guatemala City. While it is certainly not unheard of in Mesoamerica to treat a saint poorly—as in legends of saint's origins in Zinacantan where elders 'silence' their 'talking saint', San Lorenzo by pouring hot water over him, or in Amatenango where the 'evil' image of San Pedro is thrown from the church and beheaded for witchcraft (Watanabe 1990: 138)—such treatment is clearly considered a punishment for an unruly saint, in an effort to subordinate him (or her) to the local moral system. In the case of San Simón, however, poor treatment—according to Pellecer—is actually preferred by the saint.

The anthropological literature on the figure of Maximón in Santiago Atitlán paints a comparable picture of the saint. While Maximón is in many ways distinct from San Simón, those with whom I spoke repeatedly referred to this image as another variant of San Simón. Maximón is also the most thoroughly documented of these images, with ethnographers concurring in describing his promiscuous, libertine nature. One legend concerning Maximón's origins has it that he was created by jealous husbands to protect their wives from the sexual advances of other villagers while they were away. Maximón quickly became the worst offender in this regard, walking the streets and assuming the form of an attractive man or woman, seducing whomever he could. Those seduced are thought to die within a few days (Mendleson 1957: 84-85; Carlsen 1997a: 26). Likewise, Maximon was reportedly blamed as the culprit in unwanted pregnancies (Mendleson 1957: 82).While, for reasons treated below, I was unable to secure comparable descriptions of the saint, the image of San Simón as a vice-ridden rake prone to excess was invoked by critics of the cult with whom I spoke, who suggested the image merely reflected the immoral lives of its devotees.

One of the most contentious issues surrounding San Simón is the question of his origins. While I treat several interpretations of the saint's origin and identity at greater length in chapter three, an overview of some of the variation inherent here will prove useful. According to the most widely distributed prayer tract for San Simón, his origins can be traced to the discovery of his image in the mountains surrounding Zunil, by an indigenous man named Felipe. Legends of discovered saints have a long tradition in popular Catholicism in

Latin America and the Old World. Watanbe (1990) provides an excellent discussion of legends surrounding saints' origins, comparing Mesoamerican with European examples. These differ, he suggests, insofar as European 'discovered' saints are considered examples of God's direct participation in the environment, with shrines set up at the place of discovery, while in Mesoamerica, for the Maya, such discovery "signifies the saints' alien origins" (1990: 138). Saints in Mesoamerica are then brought to town centres where they are made to reside—punished if necessary as noted above—encapsulated "within the moral compass of their communities...substantiat[ing] the social and moral sovereignty of the community" (1990: 138).

One such legend I recorded concerns the miraculous appearance of San Andrés in the town of San Andrés Xecul. This image, described as quite small, cast in pure silver and clothed in fine silver garments with some 1500 old pesos scattered around his feet, appeared long ago before many people lived in the town ("only two houses"). Upon hearing of this appearance, officials from the municipal capital of San Cristóbal Totonicapán (Xecul was only a hamlet under the jurisdiction of San Cristóbal at this time), came and took the image as they had no saints in their church at the time. Seven days later they realized that the saint had disappeared. Upon investigation they found that he had returned to the cave in Xecul where he was discovered. They took him a second time, and this time put him in a large, strong pot, with a rock placed on top so he could not escape. Once again San Andrés found his way back to Xecul, at which point it was admitted that the saint wished to stay where he was found. Very soon more people moved to Xecul, where another miracle occurred. The church—described previously—was miraculously constructed overnight through divine will.

It was formed “from the air...out of pure rock...there’s no plaster, no wood, not a single nail to support it”. San Andrés took up residence in this church, with a smaller chapel dedicated at the place where he originally appeared. San Simón and Saint Jude appeared soon thereafter, and the three are considered a primordial trinity for the town. This story differs in some ways with those discussed by Watanabe, insofar as the saint did indeed remain where he was originally discovered, but it conforms with his suggestion that saints define, or are defined by, the social and moral boundaries of communities. The apparition of San Andrés in Xecul defines that community’s primordial right to exist, independent from other larger centres.

As regards the actual identity of San Simón, associations with Judas Iscariot are the most common, with strong supporting evidence. The burning of Judas figures during Holy Week in Latin America and Europe is a tradition centuries old. In popular tradition in Guatemala and other parts of Central America, effigies of Judas are constructed during Holy Week, then hung from the church or another such prominent place on Good Friday, before being burned or exploded with fireworks. While in some cases the tradition is loosely structured and informal, with anyone permitted to construct (and destroy) such an effigy, in others greater rules come into play, defining who may participate and to what capacity. June Nash (1994) provides an overview of communities which fall into the latter category, suggesting that in many cases the effigy is constructed to represent the Maya’s historic oppressor and traditional enemy, the Ladino. In certain cases, such as Amatenango de Valle in Mexico, the symbolism is immediate and obvious: in 1993 Judas was dressed as a forestry agent, complete with hard hat, thus embodying the villagers’ animosity towards these individuals, who were considered greedy and corrupt (Nash 1994: 52). While such specific identification rarely seems to be the case, Judas inevitably assumes the form of a Ladino, typically sporting a suit and tie, dress shoes and hat.

Beezley (1987) provides an excellent historical overview of this tradition in Mexico, describing the huge popularity of the event, where individuals from popular classes throughout the country constructed all manner of Judases, large and small, and exploded them with fireworks. A macabre variation included live cats, lizards or frogs packed into the figure, to deliver a "delightful fright" to spectators when the effigy was exploded (Beezley 1987: 94). Virtually all these figures represented members of the aristocracy, who were taunted and reviled during this period of unrestrained social reversal. Beezley (1987: 96) stresses that these activities were spontaneous and relatively uncoordinated, and that neither Church, civic officials or *cofradías* endorsed them. In some instances, the aristocracy clearly took offence at the tradition, such that in 1853, the governor of the Federal District issued a decree demanding that during Holy Week celebrations "no fireworks shall be thrown by hand, neither shall any kind of firearms be discharged; nor shall there be burned nor sold those figures commonly called Judases, if they have any dress or sign with which to ridicule any social class or special person" (Beezley 1987: 102). Despite this and subsequent prohibitive ordinances, Judas burnings—as mentioned above—have continued to the present in many parts of Mexico and Central America.

While in some communities then, this tradition remains an overt and obvious indictment of Ladino oppression, in others Judas takes on a more powerful spiritual role. Nash (1994: 47-48) discusses the case of Cantel in the 1950s where Judas—also identified as San Simón—received the devotion of various shopkeepers, each offering $5 to the image and plying it with drinks as it passed by mounted on a donkey. This image was constructed of a simple straw-filled body, dressed in Ladino clothing with a wooden mask defining its face. Similar images have been reported in other areas, including the pseudonymous south central Guatemalan community of Atchalán studied by Moore (1979), where in the early 1970s the effigy was the patron of the young *ministriles*—or constables responsible for maintaining order and providing messenger services—in the civil-religious hierarchy. Moore (1979) describes this tradition, whereby the *ministriles*—the lowest post in the hierarchy in which a minimum of one year of service was compulsory for Atchaleño males—maintained the image, acting as an mock *cofradía* during Holy Week celebrations. During this period, Judas was assembled and set up in the courthouse patio—with tapers burning and alms received—until Good Friday, when the image was paraded around the town accompanied by a marimba band, visiting individual homes where offerings of liquor were given. The householder in each case was required to dance with Judas, as could others if so desired. The image was then destroyed, though the mask and clothing were carefully maintained for use in following years (Moore 1979: 60-62). Watanabe (1992: 120-122) describes a similar tradition in Santiago Chimaltenango.

The form of worship, as well as the interpretations of the image's supernatural power, as recorded by Moore closely match those of San Simón, though he never specifically mentions this connection. As regards the duality (good/evil) of the image, Moore (1979: 71) quotes one town elder as follows: "One must revere this Lord, he is both sainted and accursed." The same elder went on to stress the importance of exercising respect towards

Judas, who was thought capable of providing protection, effecting cures, and bringing luck. In sum, Moore (1979: 71) suggests that "the lore about Judas has little to do with the Passion itself but stresses the potency and vindictiveness of the Easter Saturday figure." He recounts an episode involving the punishment meted out by Judas upon an individual who failed to provide him adequate respect. This type of story abounds as regards San Simón, who routinely punishes those who mock him, typically visiting illness or other misfortunes upon such individuals. My principle informant Albino Santay recounted how he personally experienced San Simón's wrath during one of his first visits to the shrine in Zunil. While visiting San Simón with a friend, it happened that marimba music was being played. Albino jokingly suggested to his friend that they should dance. His friend—more knowledgeable perhaps about San Simón's vindictive nature—reproached him for such a disrespectful statement. Soon thereafter Albino began feeling an itching sensation all over his body, as though he was covered with fleas. Upon consultation with one of San Simón's caretakers, he was instructed to dance with one of the visiting Ladinas from the Pacific coast in order to make the sensation go away. This, combined with a sincere apology to the saint, proved effective in stopping the itch.

Similar stories are recorded by Miralbés et al. (1996), corroborated by Gaitán (1976), one of the more famous being the case of Carlos Enrique Barrios, police chief in Xela, who removed the image of San Simón from the *cofradía* in Zunil, placing it in the local jail with plans to destroy it. That night Carlos dreamed that San Simón attacked him, and woke to find himself on the floor of his bedroom, with strong abdominal pains. These only receded when San Simón was returned to the *cofradía* with apologies (Miralbés et al. 1996: 54; Gaitán

1976: 27-28). Miralbés et al. also record the punishment of the local *Gobernador* in times past, who—during a period when Zunil's San Simón was kept hidden due to the overt hostility directed towards the cult by church and civic officials—discovered San Simón's image in a villager's home, seized it, dragged it into the street and kicked it. Bystanders did nothing to defend the image, waiting instead for San Simón's own punishment to manifest itself. Such occurred within a few months, when the *Gobernador*'s leg became infected. After trying all manner of medical solutions to no avail, he was finally forced to return to San Simón and beg pardon for his actions, after which his leg did indeed heal (Miralbés et al. 1996: 54-55).

Besides similarity in worship and notions regarding the supernatural power of both San Simón and the Judas figures described by Nash and Moore, other evidence supports such a dual identity. San Simón's feast day falls on October 28th, which according to the official Catholic calendar of saints is the feast day of both Saint Jude and Saint Simon. As Saint Jude (or Thaddeus) translates into Spanish as 'San Judas (Tadeo)', associations with Judas Iscariot seem plausible. In addition, the Bible records the name of Judas Iscariot's father as Simon, making another association between these names. In popular tradition in Guatemala, Judas Iscariot is thought to have had a son named Simon, and in many cases San Simón may be referred to simply as 'Judas Simón' (Ordóñez 1973: 145). Thus, for many, San Simón's identity as Judas is immediate and clear, as was the case in the shrine to his image in Xela, which explicitly denominates the image as Judas Iscariot, though the caretakers were quick to remark that San Simón is just another name for the same image.

While such stories and evidence seem to confirm San Simón's identity as Judas, other

Plate 4: Xela's Judas Iscariot

identities—as mentioned above—are commonly ascribed to this image. The nature of the type of identity assigned to the image can take one of two forms: purely Christian or 'Western', or purely Maya. In addition to Judas, other Christian personas associated with San Simón include Saint Peter and Saint Jude. Santiago Atitlán's Maximon was identified to me as Saint Peter, as one *cofradía* member sought to stress the image's identity as "an apostle of Jesus Christ". This image has also been identified as Saint Andrew, Saint Michael (Archangel) and Pedro de Alvarado, the conqueror of Guatemala (cf. Mendelson 1965: 196). Connections with Saint Jude are particularly strong in San Andrés Itzapa, where San Simón is considered by some the brother of Saint Jude, whose image is also maintained in the is considered by some the brother of Saint Jude, whose image is also maintained in the chapel. As Pellecer (1973: 46) reports, San Simón's society in that town managed to convince an otherwise hostile local priest to say a mass in Saint Jude's name, which was considered an appropriate way to honour his 'brother'. In this case, Saint Jude is considered San Simón's official 'stand-in' when legitimacy in the eyes of the Church is sought. Saint Jude and San Andrés are also strongly associated with San Simón in the town of San Andrés Xecul, the three thought of as a kind of holy trinity.

Others emphasize the San Simón's indigenous roots and identity, commonly suggesting he is in fact *Mam*, which translates in many Maya languages as 'grandfather', with the prefix *laj* or *nim* often added, implying 'venerable', 'great' or 'exalted'. In such interpretations, San Simón is considered, as Albino suggests, "the grandfather of the people, the first Maya priest". This point is well elaborated by Mendelson (1965: 137) and more so by Carlsen (1997a) who goes into detail concerning Maximón's indigenous roots. The name 'Maximón' is thought by Mendleson to represent a syncretic conflation of '*Mam*' and 'Simón', the latter referring both to Judas Iscariot (whose father was Simon) and Saint Peter (Simon Peter), the two biblical betrayers of Christ. For Carlsen (1997a: 173), Maximón is thought to more likely derive from *ma* (mister) and *xim* (knot), meaning 'Mr. Knotted', a reference to the way the image is constructed. Other indigenous identities considered by Carlsen (1997a: 25) include *Masiik*, 'Lord Tobacco' (Maximón is considered the inventor of tobacco, and constantly sports a cigarette or cigar) and *Matzajtel*, 'Lord Tzajtel Tree' (indicating the wood from which he is constructed). My own experience with the name 'Maximón' confirms Carlsen's (1997a: 172) suggestion that the term is seldom used by *cofradía* members. My inquires into the significance of 'Maximón' in Santiago Atitlán were answered with the suggestion that such is an English word. With no prompting I received the same response in Zunil, leading me to believe that—given the ambiguous origins of the term—at least some individuals in these towns have come to identify the word as English, due perhaps to the steady flow of *gringo* tourists, clutching their *Lonely Planet* guidebooks, and clamouring for guides to see the famous Maximón. The fact that strangers from far-off countries seem so well acquainted with the term may have led some locals to believe that such is indeed an English word.[12] It has been my experience that the term 'Maximón' is only used by tourists, Maya intellectuals, and some *sacerdotes mayas*, who all share one trait in their valuing of the 'indigenous' over the 'western', and thus reject such obvious Christian appellations as 'San Simón'.[13] Following ethnographic convention, I will continue to use the term 'Maximón' in specific reference to the image from Santiago Atitlán.

More esoteric and 'indigenous' interpretations of Maximón's role in Atitlán stress the sexual duality of the deity and his role in Atiteco cosmovision. Tarn and Pretchel (1986) provide a comprehensive overview of Maximón's ambiguous sexual nature, relating this more widely to the feminine principle in Atiteco religious thought. Associations with Judas are thought to carry a sexual symbolism, as the act of Judas during the last supper of 'eating first' carries with it male attributes in relation to the 'feminine' aspect of Jesus (Tarn and Pretchel 1990: 80). Moreover, Maximón in Atitlán maintains a 'wife' or 'María', who is constructed in a similar way to Maximón, and is kept in a box in the *cofradía*'s house. Other saints in Atitlán have 'wives', and the sexual symbolism linked with such is an overriding principal in Atiteco beliefs concerning creation and cosmovision, even if the feminine principal is 'inconstant' and problematic in actual practise. As noted above, regarding origin myths of Maximón, the figure's sexuality is ambiguous, appearing alternatively as male or female. This relates to Maximón's identity as *Mam*, mentioned above, which in Atiteco thought represents an important and powerful primordial creator. The original creator is uniformly considered either a male/female pair (as discussed at the outset) or a single unity possessing the attributes of both sexes. The *Mam*'s role in notions concerning sex, childbirth and creation is central here (Tarn and Pretchel 1986).

More generally, Carlsen (1997a) outlines a specific mechanism, identified as a survival from pre-Invasion times, which guides Atiteco religious thought and explains the manner in which saints were 'converted' to the local belief system. Described as the *Jaloj-K'exoj* complex, this is considered a governing principal which combines two concepts of change: *jal*, which refers to "the change manifested by a thing as it evolves through its individual life cycle" and *k'ex*, which "refers to generational change...[relating] to the transfer, hence continuity, of life" (Carlsen 1997a: 50). These concepts together "form a concentric system of change within change, a single system of transformation and renewal" (Carlsen 1997a: 51). He provides a good deal of convincing evidence, with sources ranging from the *Popol Vuh* to archaeological data, to support his suggestion that this complex has pre-Invasion roots. Moreover, its function in contemporary Atiteco thought is well delineated, and it appears to have been the guiding paradigm in converting Catholic saints to local deities, as in the example of the town's patron saint, Santiago:

> In native taxonomy, Santiago is classified as a *bokunab*, an antiquated and esoteric term now used only in the cofradías. Derived from the word *bokul*, "so many," the etymology of *bokunab* is easily understood. According to

> legend, Santiago's bokunab quality became apparent when as a soldier he created twin enemies out of one with a strike of his sword. Fortunately for the Atitecos, this ability to effect re-generation and multiplicity (i.e. Jaloj-K'exoj) from the death of the original was better applied toward agricultural fertility. Santiago joins other bokunab in the Atiteco pantheon as a fertility deity (Carlsen 1997a: 64-65).

Carlsen's suggestions of pre-Invasion continuity here are highly convincing, given the well- reasoned and researched nature of his material, and the specificity attributed to the complex, making his suggestions somewhat more plausible than those of other scholars (eg. Freidel et al. 1993) who make blanket statements to the effect that all Maya culture represents a continuity with the past. As regards Maximón or *Mam*, a similar process can be seen at work here, as the deity's role in ensuring fertility and continuity as well as his/her destructive powers are all noted. The basic assertion is that the syncretic combination of Christian and Maya concepts did not occur in a haphazard, random way, rather the *Jaloj-K'exoj* complex appears to have guided the process so as to provide continuity with the past. A final 'indigenous' personality of San Simón is that of Francisco Soguel, a folk hero from Santiago Atitlán who died about 100 years ago (Mendelson 1965:56; Carlsen 1997a: 96, personal communication). While neither Mendelson or Carlsen consider this individual as in anyway representing another of Maximón's identities, I recorded such interpretations on three occasions, including suggestions of *sacerdotes mayas* from regions outside of Atitlán who offered this as San Simón's true identity, adding that he is a *nawal*, a powerful a spiritual being associated with mountains, caves, rain, wind, fire, and cold, and 'the divine' in general as it relates to the experienced world. This final 'indigenous' interpretation of San Simón's identity seems to be a rather recent development, and will be treated at greater length in chapter three.

In general, most investigators admit to the syncretic nature of this image, stressing one or another aspect without denying the validity of others. There is little in the way of comparative studies of San Simón as he is understood in different communities, the best work being monographs which focus upon a single town. June Nash's (1994) treatment of Judas figures is one exception, though she stresses this identity perhaps at the expense of others, limiting her interpretations of the cult to a suggestion that it represents a creative form of passive resistance to Ladino domination. Guatemalan scholars have been more interested in this tradition, with Ordóñez (1973) emphasizing connections with Judas and concluding that the tradition is no more than 100 years old, representing nothing more than a failure on the part of missionaries to properly explain fundamental Christian concepts; and Castañeda (1979) suggesting that San Simón represents an example of 'imitative magic', insofar as his Ladino image represents an attempt to control and subvert the 'magical' power of the Ladino. Both interpretations seem rather superficial and appear to be based on scant secondary material. It should be clear from the preceding discussion that San Simón represents far more than a simple theological misunderstanding, or a nativistic attempt to assume the power of the Ladino oppressor. As regards the latter point, such interpretation ignores more purely 'Maya' definitions of San Simón, as *Mam* for example, as well as the case of Santiago Atitlán, where Maximón appearance is more indigenous than anything, even if he possesses Ladino attributes. The most recent academic treatment specifically dealing with San Simón in Guatemala is that of Sanchiz (1993), considered presently.

Sanchiz develops a model which she terms 'two-way syncretism' to explain the cult(s) of San Simón as presently constituted in Guatemala. Her premise is that folk Catholicism and prehispanic beliefs syncretized to form the original tradition of Maximón, thus considered an 'indigenous saint'. This tradition then syncretized again with folk Catholicism, "spiritism and other Old World magico-religious beliefs and practices"[14] to create San Simón, the 'Ladino saint' (1993: 264). Thus, for Sanchiz, the original figure is none other than Atitlán's famous Maximón, particularly as this image is the most 'indigenous' in appearance, with the latest, 'Ladino' incarnation being that of San Andrés Itzapa. While there is much of value in Sanchiz's discussion, particularly as regards the role of spiritism and spiritualism in devotions to San Simón, there are several flaws in her thesis. First of all, she considers as 'Maximón' (and thus original and indigenous) the image of San Simón in Zunil. In my experience, *cofrades* in this town never referred to their saint as Maximón, preferring always San Simón, or perhaps *Mam*. Moreover, she fails to explain why this supposedly 'indigenous' image appears as a Ladino, reserving this characterization for Itzapa's saint. The assertion that Atitlán's Maximón is the first (apparently based on notions regarding the 'primitive' appearance of the image) is, in my opinion, unfounded. According to most accounts, the present form Maximón takes in Atitlán is no more than 100 years old, though the tradition dates back further (Carlsen 1997: personal communication). Moreover, *cofrades* in different towns consistently considered their own images to be the original—and thus most authentic—San Simón, all others thought of as copies. Her assertion that Itzapa's San Simón is in all essential respects 'Ladino' is likewise unfounded, as the original *sociedad* in charge of the saint is entirely indigenous. Moreover, according to Pellecer (1973: 33) the image of San Simón in Itzapa was carefully constructed from the *Pito* tree, a special tree from which the sacred beans of the *sacerdote maya*'s *vara*—discussed in chapter two—are obtained. Special 'indigenous' rituals, including divination, were required in both the selection of the tree and the construction of the image. Thus, despite the Ladino appearance of Itzapa's (and other towns') San Simón, origins influenced in no small way by Maya cosmovision and religion seem clear.

In short, Sanchiz's construction of a linear model describing San Simón's origins and the manner in which syncretism has occurred is overly simplistic. Many of her points are, however, well-founded. As it is, Itzapa's San Simón receives by far the largest number of daily visitors of any of the shrines with which I am acquainted, and the vast majority of these devotees are indeed Ladino. That they have brought their own associations and interpretations to the cult is likewise clear, particularly as regards spiritualist ideas. This, however, has occurred in an unsystematic and haphazard manner, which makes it difficult to simply denominate Itzapa's saint as Ladino, and oppose it to the other supposedly indigenous 'Maximóns'. This not only obscures the indigenous origins of Itzapa's San Simón, but negates the relation of Maya individuals to that specific shrine. While Ladinos by far constitute the majority of visitors to the Itzapa shrine, Maya do indeed visit, and bring their own understanding of the saint with them. Likewise, Ladinos are known to regularly visit other San Simón shrines, including Zunil's and Maximón in Atitlán, which should in no way be interpreted as signifying the 'ladinization' of the images in these towns. As it is, these factors simply complicate the tradition of San Simón in Guatemala, as there is no single master narrative which describes it. Interpretations of the cult differ between Ladinos and between Maya, as well as inter-ethnically. As mentioned above, each individual seems to bring his or her own understanding to the saint, with little in the way of universal consensus present. In this sense, despite the many similarities between the cults, San Simón embodies many distinct traditions which may or may not bear relation to each other, which makes any straightforward explanation or characterization of the tradition very difficult.

The problematic issue of religious syncretism lies at the heart of this discussion, and is often obscured by the terms of the discussion. This point is made by Watanabe (1990: 131), who notes that while anthropologists have tended to characterize "Maya religious syncretism as a seamless fusion of Native and Christian elements...they tend to see in this fusion either some enduring, if ineffable, Maya culture...or a relative, yet decisive, Catholic evangelization." These are the two enduring positions in Mesoamerican scholarship, whereby either continuity with prehispanic culture or the Indian as a colonial creation is highlighted, and are termd by Watanabe 'culturalism' and 'historicism' respectively. For Watanabe (1990: 132), "unfortunately, the terms of this debate obscure the very crux of syncretism, which lies precisely in its paradoxical conjunction of both persistence and conversion, nativism and opportunism." His approach differs from both culturalist and historicist orientations insofar as he views syncretism as grounded in the local community, the arena where these concerns are manifested most concretely. The community, however, must not be considered some homogenous whole—such would lead to an equally erroneous reification of 'community' in the same way 'culture' or 'history' are reified by other scholars—but rather "a problematic social nexus within which people constantly negotiate the immediate existential concerns and possibilities of their lives, conditioned by the wider economic, political, and natural ecology of which they are a part" (Watanabe 1990: 132). Carlsen's ideas concerning the *Jaloj-K'exoj* complex, while perhaps 'culturalist' must be distinguished from the type of scholarship generally considered under this rubric, as he makes pains to outline the historical contingencies which have permitted the survival of this specific tradition, all the while aware of the fact that the community is indeed a 'problematic social nexus' in its own right. Watanabe's focus on community is likewise useful in understanding the specific nature of transformations which have occurred through time, and highlights the danger in making totalizing statements as regards both Maya culture and history.

The case of San Simón, however, represents something of a different challenge, insofar as the tradition maintains a distinct 'inter-community', even inter-ethnic dimension. Thus, while Watanabe (1990: 137) suggests that saint images are more or less uniformly the concern of each specific town, adding that "Maya rarely pray to saints of other towns", San Simón represents something of an exception in this regard, attracting devotees from many communities. Without denying the local importance of the tradition as it is understood in distinct communities, I take a broader focus in chapter three, one I feel is necessary to understand more completely the meaning this tradition holds in general terms in Guatemala. My analysis of San Simón incorporates the various issues introduced in this chapter, especially as concerns the problematic nature of community level traditions and identity.

As noted at the outset, a tension exists between the national level project of the pan-Mayanists and the reality of local cultural life. San Simón is important in this regard on two counts. First, it will be seen that the tradition (or traditions) of San Simón do vary from community to community, and many aspects of the cult are informed by strictly local conceptions of religion and worldview. A second consideration is the fact that, despite these community-level differences, San Simón, like other aspects of Maya culture in general, maintains an inter-community aspect, both with regards to the fact that the cult is fairly widespread, and insofar as it represents an important focus for pilgrimages which attract devotees from across the nation, and internationally to an extent. This latter aspect has made the saint an important focus for the anti-syncretic *sacerdotes mayas* described in the following chapter, as San Simón appears to them to represent an aspect of Maya spirituality which is not so clearly bounded by individual communities and their relation to their immediate geography and history. San Simón can be transposed by these individuals throughout the highlands, and may be considered one important symbol for a purified, essentialized and national Maya spirituality. The role of the Catholic church in this regard is considered, as San Simón has proven problematic even for priests concerned with inculturation, a fact which suggests certain limits to inculturation strategies. The interplay between syncretism (a process favoured by inculturation theology) and anti-syncretism (the approach of the *sacerdotes mayas*) will be brought into sharper relief in the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter Two

The Vicissitudes of Local Identities: Pan-Mayanism and Pan-Maya Spirituality

> Hidden thoughts of Ladino Colonists:
>
> - Killing an Indian is not the same as killing a man. It is killing a subhuman or an animal.
> - It is unfortunate that the Spanish conquistadors and the Guatemalan army have not exterminated the Indians once and for all. Now we have to finish them off using slower, even legal, procedures.
> - Oppressing the Indians is not the same as oppressing a people. It is oppressing a degenerate race of disorganized groups incapable of self-government.
> - Oppression is necessary for the Indians because it is the only way to make them behave and be useful to the country. Moreover, the Indians have asked to be governed by the Ladinos.
> - Assimilating the Maya is not the same as assimilating a civilized people with a vibrant culture. It is assimilating a people without culture or with a dying, residual, and oppressed culture. Ladinization does not harm the Maya, it gives them the opportunity to integrate themselves into a culture.
> - Liberating the Indian is dangerous because it liberates a vengeful being. Indians should remain under Ladino control and tutelage, since Ladinos know what is best for Indians.
>
> Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil (1996: 19)

The changes in community structure outlined above are more or less recognized in contemporary Mesoamerican scholarship. That this has not always been the case is evident in the general attitude which prevailed among Mesoamericanists in previous decades. A close devotion to Wolf's formulation of the closed corporate peasant community led many scholars in the recent past to describe Maya culture wholly in terms of the village structure, arguing implicitly or explicitly that indigenous identity effectively ended at the town boundaries, thus denying any significant inter-community indigenous affiliation, let alone any form of pan-Maya identity. While this model is useful in describing Maya social organization for much of the colonial period, it must be considered an ideal type, one less and less applicable to the current situation in light of changes wrought in the present century. Most telling in this regard is the existence of a well-organized pan-Maya movement with roots at the community level. In the present chapter I examine the roots and nature of this movement and conclude with a examination of pan-Maya spirituality, and the efforts of a new generation of Maya priests in the purification of their traditions.

Before turning to an examination of current pan-Mayanism, it is worth considering briefly to what extent this movement is an entirely new development, and what, if any precedents may be found in the historical record. While it seems evident that the form of revitalization currently underway in Guatemala is of a scale never before seen, the Totonicipán revolt of 1820 in some ways foreshadows the rise of Maya nationalism. This revolt has been treated by Contreras (1951), Bricker (1981) and McCreery (1989). While these scholars take somewhat different perspectives on the event, a central issue treated concerns whether or not the revolt represented a burgeoning pan-Maya identity in light of the fact that Maya from several towns united at various stages and in various levels against Ladinos, refusing tribute payments. For Contreras (1951: 63), the revolt represented a harkening back to prehispanic times, and the reestablishment of a K'iche' kingdom. Bricker (1981: 177) stresses the intra-ethnic aspect of the dispute, though her evidence is somewhat unconvincing.[1] McCreery (1989: 55) considers class to have been the key issue, and animosity between rich and poor Maya villagers is thought to be the reason that the revolt failed. This latter interpretation seems to be the best argued, but it must be recognized that the revolt itself (abortive as its results were and as limited in scale as it was) did involve Maya from several villages which, if we are to closely follow the closed corporate community model, should be as prone to animosity amongst themselves as towards their Ladino oppressors.

While I would not go so far as to equate the ideology motivating participants in the Revolt in 1820 with that operating today, I will suggest that Maya unity has been a potential force, one realized to a limited degree in this revolt. The limited unity obtained by participants in the Totonicapán Revolt cannot be considered a pan-Maya unity, as the individuals involved all belonged to the K'iche' linguistic group only. It was, however, an inter-community affair, and this fact alone makes it more of an historical antecedent to present day circumstances than interpretations which stress a seemingly eternal intra-ethnic conflict. Differences between communities do, of course, exist, but actual conflict seems to occur primarily over issues such as the use and ownership of land, not cultural matters, which in their diverse expressions still maintain an essential 'mayaness' constituted not in a small way through their opposition to Ladino culture. The concept of the closed corporate community needs to be modified to deal with these issues. While I would not advocate its complete abandonment—highland communities still exhibit characteristics which may be explained, partially at least, by this model—I believe that attention must be focussed on the degree of openness of individual communities. Despite all the changes which have occurred at the community level especially in the 20th century, highland villages cannot yet be characterized generally as fully 'open'. Suspicion and distrust towards outsiders still characterizes many towns, but these same communities are currently engaging in a dialogue with these outsiders, on indigenous terms. More importantly, the breakdown of communal structures has not resulted in the predicted 'collapse' of Maya culture: Maya villages, while often internally fractured and factionalized, still manage to provide a sense of self to Maya independent from that of Ladinos. Maya culture has not become a 'hollow shell', though it has indeed changed. The emergence of a pan-Maya movement in Guatemala speaks to the guarded opening of local communities to the external forces they have resisted for centuries, in an attempt to control or at least influence their relationship vis-à-vis the nation-state.

The Nature of the Current Pan-Maya Movement

That the current pan-Maya movement in Guatemala represents something of a new development as far as Maya unity is concerned cannot be denied. Its most recent roots are traceable directly to the horrific counter-insurgency program vigorously pursued by the Guatemalan government during the late 1970s and early 1980s, though evidence of the beginnings of grassroots organization precedes this by a few years. These early organizations however—discussed in chapter one in terms of the development-oriented efforts of *Acción*

Católica and other agencies—were all but wiped out by the violence which followed. The April 14, 1998effects of this period of terror upon the coalescence of a pan-Maya identity are generally acknowledged (Menchú et al. 1995). In this section I will briefly describe some of the antecedents to current Maya activism, before turning to a discussion of the nature of the present movement. Santiago Bastos and Manuela Camus (1995, 1996) provide the most comprehensive overview available of popular and indigenous organizations during this period. These two publications contain useful overviews and summaries of the positions of each player, relying to a great extent upon interviews with activists and examination of published material from Maya organizations. The researchers, while occasionally offering their own interpretations, seem to assume more of a reporting role, letting the players concerned speak for themselves. As little else, to my knowledge, has been published as regards concrete details of Maya activism and organization, I rely considerably upon their work to provide the necessary background for the discussion which follows. Where possible I include the interpretations of other scholars, as well as original documents from Maya activists themselves.

As mentioned in chapter one, the 1970s marked the beginning of a general move towards political and cultural activism among the Maya in Guatemala. The role of the Catholic Church in fostering a general rise in consciousness in rural communities as regards issues of exploitation, land rights and human rights in general is well acknowledged. The early influence of the political party *Democracia Christiana* (DC) is likewise noted. The Church was the first organization to provide space for the discussion and resolution of these problems, and initially considered such in a moral and ethical light, with little in the way of direct political solutions. The individuals the Church exposed to these issues, namely the *catequistas* they trained, initially tended to see their role as limited to the spiritual leadership of the community, with end goals of becoming priests or nuns to thus be in a better position to address these concerns within their villages. It was soon acknowledged, however, that the position of spiritual leader was limited in addressing in any concrete way the practical problems encountered. The next big step in this regard was more overtly political, as some space for the redress of these issues was found within political parties, particularly DC. It was in this period that many local leaders attained political success in municipal elections, opening the door to further organization and expression of community grievances and desires at the political level. Extant political parties, like DC, while offering some space for the voicing of issues of local concern, proved inadequate to deal seriously and exclusively with such, which led to the more specific grassroots organizations which began to take shape at the mid to late 1970s (Bastos and Camus 1996: 22).

The 1970s was thus a period of nascent ethnic revival, where communities began seeking the political space which would ensure them a voice at local and national levels. Early movements centred around issues of land and were not strictly ethnic in nature—including both Ladino and Maya peasants—but included a strong ethnic majority, which later came to define itself on its own terms. Given the grassroots nature of these movements and the repressive nature of political rule, there was little coordination and efforts remained limited and not as clearly defined as would later be the case. Some early efforts at coordinating and defining these movements and raising them above the level of the individual community can be seen in the series of conferences organized by *Pastoral*

Indígena, considered the final stage in the organizational work of *Acción Católica* during this period, and uniting Maya intellectuals from a variety of backgrounds in a discussion of ethnic, political and social issues (Bastos and Camus 1996: 23-25).

Indigenous language came to dominate the agenda of Maya intellectuals as the defining point of cultural identity. Embryonic efforts at standardizing a Maya alphabet and publishing Maya texts—most notably the *Popol Vuh*—were coupled with efforts of North American linguists to study Maya languages in a systematic manner. The magazine *Ixim* likewise began monthly publication in 1977, and was the first periodical to exclusively treat Maya issues, with the goal of educating the indigenous population so as to foster the development of a pan-Maya consciousness which might aid in their liberation from centuries of repression (Bastos and Camus 1996: 25-26). One of the more interesting developments as regards cultural issues were the attempts to redefine and assume control over Maya beauty pageants which had long been under the jurisdiction of Ladinos. Great criticism was leveled at the annual Folklore Festival of Cobán, which included the crowning of the Maya Queen, as the organizers and judges were without exception Ladinos, and members of the aristocracy. The Festival was called "'an aesthetic apology for the miserable life of the indigenous people' that serves to mislead indigenous people, entertain *gringos*, and 'relieve, purify and assure the conflicted conscience of the same Ladino organizer and spectator of the tribute'"[2] (anonymous author in *Ixim*, quoted in Bastos and Camus 1996: 27; see also Hendrickson 1991: 292, passim). This cultural revival was accompanied by a growing social and political activism, that found its most sympathetic voice in the organization *Comité de Unidad Campesina* (CUC). While this organization represented concerns shared by all peasants, Maya and Ladino, it reflected a strong ethnic majority in the Maya. In the years that followed, the Maya became increasingly politicized and adamant in their demands for systemic change (Carmack 1988: 51-55).

By the close of the 1970s, the spiral of generalized violence unleashed upon the nation by the military, began to spell an end to these nascent organizations, as leaders—local and national—were routinely tortured and/or executed or forced into exile. This situation led to a more direct and formal association between organizations like CUC and the guerrilla. That the guerrilla during this time began to receive a great deal of support from the indigenous population does not necessarily point to a general concurrence in ideological orientation between the two. As Davis (1988: 23) suggests, "Indians began joining with the guerrilla organizations not because of any deep ideological understanding of or commitment to their cause but rather as a means of individual and community defense against the selective killings and acts of terror by the army and the death squads." This is not to deny the potential for a more general pan-Maya identity, which seems to have indeed been taking form in the 1970s, rather the decision to take up arms was influenced more by the direct threat the counter insurgency campaign posed to the very existence of an individual's family and community, than by a perceived threat to Maya unity. Where the latter is concerned, as well as more general issues of human rights and equality, the Maya have consistently chosen a pacific route, avoiding where possible violent confrontation over such ideological issues (Bastos and Camus 1996: 32-35).

In the wake of the extreme violence of the early 1980s, popular and indigenous organizations began to emerge once again. The political and social context in which this revival took place in many ways differed from that of the 1970s, and thus requires a brief summary. Following the overthrow of Ríos Montt in 1982, military rule continued under Mejía Víctores, though the violence in the highlands lessened in intensity. As Annis (1987: 5) suggests, "the war abated only because a well-trained and brutal army killed and overkilled all possible enemies. Quite simply, after a certain point, there was no one left to shoot back." The guerrilla was not, however, eliminated, rather they were temporarily beaten into submission, re-emerging later in the decade with renewed efforts. The military maintained its strong presence in the countryside, with the continued mobilization of local communities in the infamous 'Civil Self-defence Patrols' (PAC). Selective murder of university students and local leaders continued, as did larger massacres in villages—one of the latest in 1990 in Santiago Atitlán (Loucky and Carlsen 1991). In general, repression continued during this period, though at a lower level than was previously the case (Bastos and Camus 1996: 41-42).

The greatest change in the political system during this period occurred in 1986, when civil elections were called for the first time since the overthrow of the revolutionary government of 1944. The winner of this election was the DC candidate, Vinicio Cerezo, who offered the first hope in many years for systematic change. The DC government, however, faced strong opposition from both the army and the nation's economic elite, which effectively thwarted any plans for meaningful reform. The greatest achievements of this government were in the international sphere, securing credit and loans for Guatemala—denied during the height of violence—and establishing a dialogue with other Central American states regarding a general plan to bring peace to the region. Cerezo was frustrated in his attempts at tax reform—he had merely wished to put an end to tax evasion—when, in protest, the economic elite effectively paralyzed the nation in 1987 through the machinations of CACIF (the Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Activities). The government found itself isolated on all sides, including the military which threatened two coups in a move to show Cerezo who held the real power in the nation. The final years of the DC government were marked by corruption, nepotism and inaction—traditional attributes of party politics in Guatemala (Bastos and Camus 1996: 43-45; cf. Davis 1988: 33-36).

The next government, headed by Serrano Elías, proved as ineffective or more so in addressing the nation's problems, though some headway was gained in the peace process with an initial dialogue started between the government and the guerilla, URNG (the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity). These talks quickly floundered, and it was left to popular organizations to pick up the pieces and press for an end to the civil war. In 1988, due to the pressure of popular organizations and the Catholic Church in particular, the National Commission of Reconciliation (CNR) was founded, and the National Dialogue (DN) began with an aim of bringing about peace. Absent from the dialogue were the main players, the URNG (as they were still in arms against the government), as well as the government, the army, and CACIF. The Church and popular organizations took the lead in the dialogue, working hard to delineate the obstacles to peace, in the hopes of finding solutions acceptable to all parties. With sporadic participation from the government and the guerrilla, some headway was made in the early 1990s at UN sponsored meetings in Madrid, San José (Costa Rica), Oslo, El Escorial (Spain), Ottawa, Quito, Metepec (Mexico) and

Atlixco (Mexico). These meetings, and the ones that followed, were essential in laying the groundwork for the peace accords later signed between the URNG and the Government, and demonstrate the efficacy of popular organization in achieving concrete results, something lacking in traditional party politics (Bastos and Camus 1996: 45-53).

With the *autogolpe*—self-engineered coup—of Serrano Elías on May 25,1993, Guatemala's precarious political situation took a turn for the worse. Faced with growing opposition and general incapacity to resolve the country's economic crisis, Serrano Elías rather arrogantly decided to assume complete control over the nation, dissolving congress and suspending constitutional rights. Only the high command of the military supported the president's decision, the rest of the nation's political and social forces uniting in an attempt to oust him. After a tumultuous week and a half, with four further coups, Ramiro de León Carpio—erstwhile Procurator of Human Rights—was elected president on June 5. This series of events sparked something of a quickening in popular organization in Guatemala, and intensified a general demand for systemic change of the political system. Political, business and certain union interests coalesced into the *Coordinadora Multisectorial* (Multisectorial Coordinator), while other popular organizations—including Maya groups represented by *Majawil Q'ij*—formed the *Foro Multisectorial Social* (FMS: Multisectorial Social Forum). Both groups united in the *Instancia Nacional de Consenso* (INC: National Petition of Consensus) to denounce the *autogolpe* and demand a return to democratic practices (Bastos and Camus 1995: 45-46; Fischer and McKenna Brown 1996: 13).

It is no accident that Guatemalans, most notably the Maya, proved so ready to mobilize to demand change in this moment of political and social crisis. Popular organization is, indeed, the hallmark of the 1980s, proving much more important than the switch to civil rule, as the latter proved to do little to lessen the military's actual power in the nation. The switch to civil rule did, however, provide a somewhat safer venue for the expression of popular sentiment. Maya and Ladinos united in various organizations which sought the redress of human rights abuses, fiscal and labour reform, and the recognition of the rights of the poor. Regarding the types of indigenous organizations which have evolved in the past decade, Bastos and Camus (1996: 58) suggest these have taken two forms. More general and inclusive popular organizations dealing with concrete issues of human rights abuses, for example, differ from the more strictly Maya organizations and institutions which deal exclusively with issues of ethnicity and cultural revitalization. It is important to consider both these types of organization, as the former—though often including Ladinos—deal invariably with indigenous issues, and include an overwhelming majority of indigenous membership. The latter are more obviously 'Maya' in their agenda, and, during the early years at least, somewhat less politically oriented than the popular organizations. In the following overview and discussion, I will refer to this latter group alternatively as 'Ethnic' or 'Maya', though by use of the latter term I do not suggest that the popular organizations cannot be considered 'Maya': rather their agenda speaks less to ethnicity and more to class-based interests. In short, both these forms of organization have played an important role in the general pan-Maya movement, addressing different issues but united in their demand for systemic change.[3]

The concern with the primacy of ethnicity in the ideology of Maya intellectuals has come to highlight the ideological differences between themselves and other Maya activists, who in some ways have down-played ethnicity, choosing to concentrate instead upon class and other 'popular' interests. Bastos and Camus (1996) in a survey of newspaper articles by or about Maya activists from the period 1986-1992, identify five types of entries: those by or about members of popular organizations; Maya intellectuals; government functionaries; non-organized activists (individuals, families, small groups of workers etc.); and others (*cofradías* etc.) They compared as well the content of entries (summarized as a concern towards human rights, ethnicity, socioeconomics or other concerns) with respect to each of the five actors, and compiled their results in a chart, reproduced below. While the number of entries varies considerably (the most coverage was given to popular organizations, then to Maya intellectuals, functionaries, others, and non-organized activists), patterns clearly emerge as regards different orientations of Maya activists.

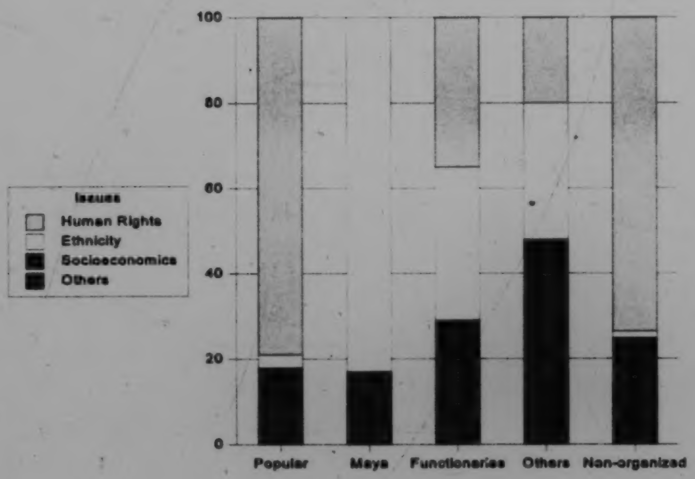


Figure 1: Issues Considered in terms of Actor. Adapted from Bastos and Camus (1996: 123)

While the clearest divergence seems to occur between popular organizations and Maya intellectuals, this does not mean that Maya intellectuals are not concerned with issues of human rights. Rather, as Bastos and Camus (1996: 137-140) demonstrate, these institutions and individuals view human rights violations as having occurred within an ethnic framework. Thus, they see their work, particularly as regards publication, to be centred more directly in the explanation and criticism of the current ethnic situation in Guatemala, without necessarily down-playing other issues (such as human rights) which they feel are subsumed within the greater dynamic of ethnic relations. In the early 1990s, several key events served to bring this divergence in the form of Maya activism to the fore, as conflict between activists was played out publicly. These events include the second meeting of the Continental Campaign of 500 Years of Indigenous and Popular Resistance, which occurred in Quetzaltenango in 1991; the nomination of Rigoberta Menchú for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992; the above-mentioned *autogolpe* (self-engineered coup) of civilian President Serrano Elías in 1993; and the development of an accord on the rights of indigenous people in Guatemala, signed by the government and URNG in 1995.

The campaign for 500 Years of Indigenous and Popular Resistance was an emotionally and politically charged affair, which attracted huge crowds for the final demonstration in Xela (Quetzaltenango) in October 1991.[4] The organizers of the campaign sought to unite indigenous and popular sectors on the basis of their shared experience as an exploited and dominated class, "keeping in mind that in addition to the indigenous population; peasants, workers, afro-americans, and popular sectors have suffered together the exploitation, the genocide, it is for this that in its struggle, the campaign maintains a class-based character, not a racial one"[5] (quoted in Bastos and Camus 1996: 169). For the conferences that took place prior to the final march and rally in Xela, the campaign boasted participation from "259 delegates, more than 125 invited visitors and 362 observers...belonging to 347 indigenous organizations, thus representing almost every indigenous, popular and afro-american organization in the continent...and 49 ethnicities, nations or aboriginal peoples"[6] (quoted in Bastos and Camus 1996: 170). Rigoberta Menchú was a central figure in the event, accompanied by Danielle Mitterand and other internationals to guarantee her safety.

In order to host this event, it was recognized early on that coordination of popular organizations with an ethnic focus would be necessary, which led to the founding of *Majawil Q'ij* which served as a coordinating body for this type of organization. The specific mandate of *Majawil Q'ij* involved preparing and securing support for the Xela conference, and ensuring indigenous representation in the event. Among the organizations which joined *Majawil Q'ij* were several broad-based human rights organizations, as well as a variety of smaller regional peasant organizations, municipal organizations and religious groups. Notably absent from *Majawil Q'ij* were the more strictly Maya institutions, such as COMG, the Council of Maya Organizations of Guatemala. COMG was founded in 1990 and has since served as the coordinator of various Maya institutions and organizations. The refusal of Maya organizations to support the event was connected directly to ideological differences between the popular and Maya activists, summarized by Bastos and Camus (1996: 172), quoting noted Maya intellectual Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil and editors of Cholsamaj, a Maya publishing house:

> Specifically, the 'Mayas' argued that the Continental Campaign was not managed by Indigenous people: even though it was indigenous organizations that initiated it, "perhaps because of a lack of political experience...they were eliminated from the map, and this continental campaign came to be controlled by latinos from the left" (Cojtí). Secondly, as a consequence of this and on a quantitative level, "the representatives of Indian organizations were marginalized" (Cojtí), "at least 90% were from popular organizations that did not support the vindication of specific rights of Indian peoples, the result was that they did not make reference to our rights...In face of these perspectives we must emphasize and value the perspectives of the Maya People" (Cholsamaj). Moreover, there was a qualitative difference, whereby, according to Cojtí "it is not fair, or equal, that you place a semi-literate k'iche' before a Héctor Díaz Polanco [a Mexican/Dominican anthropologist noted for his defence of leftist positions as regards questions of ethnicity], it's an injustice; regardless there they were, participating one on one." To sum up, "the leftist and Marxist influence" (Cojtí) was palpable.[7]

This rupture between popular and Maya organizations during this period went as far as to inhibit a general support among Maya intellectuals for the nomination of Rigoberta Menchú for the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize. Many of these Maya, while respecting the work of Menchú, considered her nonetheless too far left in her political orientation and too closely connected with popular sectors to merit official endorsement by Maya institutions. Menchú was often criticized for her strong connections with popular organizations, and a corresponding lack of focus upon issues of ethnicity as basic to Guatemala's problems. Following meetings between Menchú and Maya institutions, this position was modified somewhat, as Menchú began to emphasize ethnicity to a degree, resulting in a limited support on behalf of these organizations: "As an institution, (the posture) is not to support her directly, rather [indirectly] as Mayas, primarily as she is a Maya woman—without analyzing her political tendencies, as her's is not an authentic Maya politics...she actively encourages, for me personally...integrationist positions...subordinated to western culture...If the award is given [however] it will be a good thing, you understand? We will be able to take it as a banner for the rescue and revindication of the Maya People"[8] (quoted in Bastos and Camus 1996: 184). The divisions between popular and Maya organizations were somewhat smoothed over in subsequent years, as the need for unity outweighed ideological differences.

The next important event which would test the mettle of nascent Maya organizations was the Serrano Elías' *autogolpe*. As mentioned above, broad-based organized resistance to this event coalesced very quickly in Guatemala, though the reaction of Maya organizations with a more strictly ethnic focus was distinct from that of the popular groups. Noting the lack of Maya representation in the INC, Maya intellectuals formed the *Asamblea del Pueblo Maya* (APM: Assembly of the Maya People), on June 5. There was tremendous participation at this initial meeting, with 213 representatives from 86 Maya organizations taking part, including Rigoberta Menchú. The country's political situation was discussed from a distinctively ethnic perspective, with consensus sought regarding the form of action the Maya should take. It was suggested that the root of Guatemala's political problems was the fact that the entire system was controlled by an ethnic and economic minority, prone to in-fighting and corruption, which had resulted in the "proliferation of political parties lacking ideology and definite positions [and] the loss of credibility of governmental institutions"[9] (APM quoted in Bastos and Camus 1995: 47). It was decided that the current political situation presented an opportunity for real change, and that the Maya should offer a united front to distinguish their demands from those of other sectors. In the short term, APM advocated the constitution of a provisional government council, with the Maya represented alongside five other sectors defined as political parties, private enterprise, unions, popular organizations, and the

National Commission for Reconciliation. In addition, the APM was to be made permanent, to act as a consulting body and to guarantee continued Maya participation in Government. As an immediate juridical goal, the APM sought the ratification of Treaty 169 of the International Labor Organization (concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries) which together with the specific rights of the Maya People, formulated by COMG, would provide the basis for the legal recognition of indigenous rights in Guatemala (Bastos and Camus 1995: 47).

In light of the division between popular and ethnic Maya organizations, it is not surprising that the popular Maya organizations already integrated in INC through FMS objected to the program of APM. The popular groups interpreted the nation's current political crisis in different terms from the ethnic organizations, pointing to the military as the main source of the nation's problems, as opposed to the more systematic critique of Ladino domination presented by APM. These popular groups eventually coalesced into the *Instancia de Unidad y Consenso Maya* (IUCM: Maya Petition for Unity and Consensus), resulting in a more 'Maya' directorship than was possible through simple membership in FMS. The IUCM, however, consistently supported popular sectors in the INC throughout the crisis. The APM remained apart throughout the conflict, and was refused entry into the INC as a specific entity, as the INC considered the Maya already represented through the presence of IUCM. The APM continued, however, to pressure the new president independently, often defining their position in opposition to popular sectors. The IUCM and APM came to define themselves separately as regards political action. In the months that followed, the IUCM offered the most vocal and constant criticism of the government, alongside the popular sector in general, particularly demanding an end to militarization in the country. In contrast, the APM constantly sought new spaces to operate, as Maya, within the government. They approved such actions as the appointment of the first Maya Minister of Education in the nation's history, and gave tacit approval to the elections and referendum called. Despite these divisions, Maya organizations of both types had reached a greater level of maturity and effectiveness through this crisis, evidenced in a growing Government recognition of the power of this sector (Bastos and Camus 1995: 48-58).

The next challenge to face Maya organizations proved much more effective in fostering a general Maya unity than previous crises, as for the first time both popular and ethnic activists managed to unite despite ideological differences. This challenge arose during attempts to bring the peace process back on track, which had stalled since 1992. The Maya were called upon to help formulate documents which might provide a basis for an accord between the government and the URNG regarding indigenous rights. When an agreement to reinitiate the process was finally reached in January of 1994, the role of Maya organizations was more clearly defined. As the agenda in 1994 envisioned a final peace accord signed by the end of the year (such was indeed optimistic, as the final agreement was not signed until December 29, 1996), a good deal of pressure was placed upon Maya and other organizations called upon specifically to contribute to the process. In March, the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and the Agreement on a Timetable for the Negotiations of a Firm and Lasting Peace in Guatemala were signed, and in June an Agreement on resettlement of the population groups uprooted by the armed conflict, and an Agreement on the establishment of a truth Commission to clarify past human rights violations and acts of violence were signed. In October discussion began on the theme of rights and identity of indigenous peoples (Bastos and Camus 1995: 58-60; United Nations 1994: 191-193).

It was in this field that Maya organizations were under the most pressure to produce documents and define their position, though the Maya played a role in each of the accords signed, participating with 11 other sectors integrated in the general *Asemblea de la Sociedad Civil* (ASC: Assemby of Civil Society) whose mandate it was to promote consensus among the various sectors on each issue and pass on recommendations to the main players in negotiations, the Government and the URNG. In light of this important and historic responsibility, it was considered necessary among all Maya activists, ethnic and popular, to unite so as to more effectively fulfill their task. Thus, on May 11, 1994, a general coordinating body, the *Coordinación de Organizaciones del Pueblo Maya*—COPMAGUA—was formed, representing Maya activists from differing ideological perspectives. Four extant coordinating groups—IUCM, COMG, ALMG (the Academy of Mayan Languages of Guatemala), and APM—representing many more organizations at various levels, formed the core of COPMAGUA, and immediately began working on the production of a document outlining their position vis-à-vis indigenous identity and rights.

While admitting to differences in perspective and ideology, participants in COPMAGUA decided to work towards consensus. As a starting point, COMG (1995 [1991]) had already published a document outlining the specific rights of the Maya people, though it was recognized that this had to be altered before presentation to the ASC. The most contentious issue involved the autonomy of the Maya People, as the document produced by COMG demanded near complete territorial, political, juridical, social and economic independence within a highly decentralized Guatemalan state. Members of COPMAGUA realized that these demands would have to be toned down in order to be accepted by the ASC. The document they produced stressed the history of exploitation the Maya had endured and offered a synopsis of current oppression and injustice, before dealing with concrete issues of identity and rights. Maya identity is conceived of as continuous from pre-Invasion times to the present, despite the great disruptions caused by Spanish colonialism, which is considered to have been actively and passively resisted. Specific attributes of Maya identity include, among others: use of a Maya language; self-identification as Maya; distinct ethical, juridical and spiritual values; a distinct cosmovision that dictates respect for Mother Nature and fellow creatures; the continued use of ancient numerical and calendrical systems; and the use of traditional clothing, especially among women. Specific rights are considered in political, cultural, economic and social terms. Autonomy (political, social, cultural and economic) is still stressed in the COPMAGUA document, though not as forcefully as in the COMG document (COMG 1995: 35-51).

Predictably, the COPMAGUA recommendations were further altered before approved by the ASC, who toned down references to autonomy. The ASC stressed the co-existence of the Maya, and other indigenous peoples (the Xinca and Garifuna) with the Ladino population, within a single Guatemalan nation. The Guatemalan state, however, was criticized for being "homogenizing, centralist, class-based, militarist, patriarchal, repressive and ethnocentric"[10] (COMG 1995: 58). The resolution of the long-standing problems of the Maya was considered possible only through the reconstitution of the state into an "pluricultural and plurilingual [entity]...that satisfies the needs of the peoples that coexist within Guatemala"[11] (COMG 1995: 59). Political, cultural, economic and social rights proposed by the ASC further demonstrate the need for a decentralized, pluralistic state. In political terms, the Maya are considered possess the right to exist fully and freely as a distinct People, within the state. This implies certain territorial rights, which are defined in terms of as those lands currently possessed by the Maya. Further political rights include the freedom to organize and live in peace. Cultural rights proposed by the ASC are virtually identical to those formulated by COPMAGUA, and include, among others: the co-officialization of Maya languages; the right to an education based in Maya culture and language right up to the University level; and the right to religious expression and free access to traditional ceremonial centres. Considering that economic issues, like agrarian reform, are treated separately in subsequent accords, the ASC had little to offer besides proposing the right to communal as well as individual landholdings, and rights to natural resources and revenue generated from tourism. Social rights specified guaranteed access to basic services, as well as promotion of traditional medicine, with a reiteration of the right to a Maya education which forms "one of the bases of an integral social development"[12] (COMG 1995: 75).

While the document produced by the ASC treats many of the same issues considered important by COPMAGUA, it tends to stress the role of the Maya as a entity within the state, not in competition with or control over it. Autonomy is thus down-played, though greater powers are proposed for the Maya, as it is recommended that the state itself be thoroughly decentralized. These recommendations were to go through a final revision by the negotiating parties before being officialized in the Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples, signed March 31, 1995. With this accord, the Maya are legally recognized for the first time as a distinct people with special rights within Guatemala. Regarding identity, the following 5 point definition was agreed to, representing an officialization of the notion of an essentialized, transposable and immutable pan-Maya character. In these terms, the Maya are characterized and defined by:

> i) a direct descendence from the ancient mayas; ii) languages that share a common maya root; iii) a cosmovision based in the harmonic relation between all elements in the universe, in which the human being is but one element among many, the earth is the mother that gives life, and maize is a sacred sign, the axis of their culture. This cosmovision has been transmitted from generation to generation through the production of materials and writings, as well through oral tradition, in which the woman has played a leading role. iv) a common culture based in the principles and structures of maya thought, a philosophy, a legacy of scientific and technological knowledge, a unique artistic and aesthetic conception, a unique and collective historic memory, an community-based organization founded in concepts of solidarity and respect for others, and a conception of authority based in ethical and moral values; and v) self-identification [as Maya] (United Nations1995: 7-8)[13]

Further aspects of the accord treat discrimination, rights of indigenous woman, specific cultural rights identified as language, indigenous surnames, spirituality, temples, ceremonial centres and sacred places, use of costume, respect for Maya science and technology, educational reform, and reform of communication media, and specific civil, political, social and economic rights, most notably rights to and protection of communal land (United Nations 1995: 9-33).

While this agreement did not reflect all the desires of the Maya activists who helped produce it, it is considered an important step in their struggle for cultural and political autonomy. The accord represents the culmination of a decade of Maya organization and activism, and the overcoming of internal ideological differences in one instance at least. It is important to note that ties to community are emphasized in this accord, as well as the documents that preceded it, which suggests a strong connection between Maya intellectuals and their grassroots bases. In light of this, I argue that the development of a truly nationalistic Maya consciousness in Guatemala has not gone hand in hand with the dissolution of community structure, as indeed particular sections of the peace accords outline provisions aimed at strengthening community structure. That these communities are less 'closed' than may previously have been the case cannot be denied, but they are still seen as strong focal centres for identity and cultural life and practice. What is denied here, however, is any essential variation between communities in terms of culture. This, however, seems to be problematic only for the North American anthropologist, as the essentialized summaries of Maya identity and culture proved the least contentious items among both Maya and Ladino participants in the peace process.

It is perhaps appropriate at this point to examine some anthropological perspectives on pan-Mayanism. The most important issue for anthropologists seems to concern the pan-Mayanists' essentialization and homogenization of Maya culture, something Western scholars have some difficulty with as—one way or another—they have tended to stress individualized local community structures as constituting the heart of Maya identity, and the ultimate source of its strength. For Smith (1991: 29), pan-Mayanism appears as a surprising development—not only in light of the intense oppression the Maya have suffered in recent years, but because it seems so 'un-Maya' in many ways. She outlines some of the history of Maya resistance to Ladino domination, suggesting that the strength of Maya culture and the reason for its survival can be seen in its diversity and localized nature, "which allows for a variety of adept responses to changed circumstances, and prevents the state from assaulting all Maya communities at once" (Smith 1991: 31). That the work of pan-Mayanists seems to involve the creation of a pan-Maya identity or culture which is in many was a distillation of a few external traits is something Smith identifies as a new development in Maya resistance. While in many respects she is correct in this interpretation—the form pan-Mayanism has taken has no concrete precedent in Guatemalan history—I question her reification of the community as the ultimate source of Maya culture and resilience.

As noted in the example of the Totonicipán rebellion, the Maya have been able to unite in the face of oppression in the past, if only partially and ultimately unsuccessfully. In that particular case, it seems reasonable to assume that the Maya involved in the revolt, though from different towns, saw something in themselves that spoke to a common experience, and perhaps at some level, a common identity as Maya opposed to Ladinos. This is not a concrete, well-defined identity as pan-Mayanists would have it, but a contingent, fuzzy, shared sense of peoplehood with direct roots in the Spanish Invasion. Whether or not community structures, culture, economics or religion were markedly altered following the Spanish Invasion is the topic of countless studies, with little in the way of consensus reached, though positions generally crystallize into historicist or culturalist perspectives. In either case, the most enduring legacy of the Spanish Invasion, and its most salient aspect for the present discussion, was the resulting dualization of Guatemalan society into Maya and Ladino. Maya are united, whether conscious of this fact or not, in their position as an oppressed people at the hands of the Ladino. Arguments which suggest Maya identity to be essentially fractured into hundreds of distinct communities—while true to an extent—obscure this potential for a greater unity. This sort of argument rings particularly false when suggestions are made to the effect that Maya from one community consider Maya from another community on the same terms as the Ladino: that all outsiders, regardless of ethnicity, are considered enemies and are placed on the same level as the Other. Were this the case, pan-Mayanism could never have developed. At the first sign of government oppression, tremendous scapegoating and mutual recriminations to protect community and personal interests would have rendered any form of mass resistance impossible. That communities did indeed turn upon each other in some instances is noted by Watanabe (1992: ix), but were intra-ethnic Maya animosity to be of the dimensions assumed by certain positions, historicist and culturalist, the work of the military would have been easy indeed. That this was not the case speaks to a different—though not necessarily competing—vision of Maya identity. While rooted in community, Maya are tied together through common experiences vis-à-vis Ladino domination as well as a degree of shared culture. Those Maya who become conscious of this potential are inevitably intellectuals from diverse backgrounds, and are perhaps better disposed to view their identity in broader terms than the subsistence farmer who still maintains exceptionally strong ties to the community and land.

Smith (1991: 33) cautions against the possibility that pan-Mayanism may harden into a dogmatic, hegemonic, single version of Maya culture which fails to take advantage of local diversities. While this concern is well placed, it seems that pan-Mayanists—incredibly diverse themselves in political goals and background, despite their tendency towards essentialization—have been well aware of this diversity and wish to see it respected. Indeed, the plurality of sociocultural expressions of Maya culture is noted in the agreement signed between the Government and the URNG regarding indigenous rights and identity (COMG 1995: 82). Another of Smith's (1991: 33) concerns deals with the threat of the pan-Mayanists' agenda being coopted by the state. It does not appear that this is likely to happen in any totalizing sense. As noted above in the case of the APM, the Maya in this instance sought to work with the state where possible, while retaining a good degree of autonomy. Other expressions of pan-Mayanism, especially those connected with popular interests, actively resist this sort of participation, though face charges from other pan-Mayanists that they have been coopted by popular, leftist, class-based interests. That pan-Mayanism embraces such a variety of interests highlights its internal diversity, which—like the localized diversity valued by anthropologists—represents a source of strength. While occasionally divisive, pan-Mayanists have been able to overcome these internal differences when needed—as in the case of the peace accords—making the movement very much an effective political force.

Watanabe (1995) provides a very useful perspective on pan-Mayanism, outlining the impact of this movement on anthropology. The persistence and, in recent years, florescence of Maya culture and identity stands in the face of long-standing predictions by anthropologists—culturalist and historicist—as to the imminent demise of the Maya in light of increasing (and too often violent) contact with the state and Ladinos. As the inadequacy of these visions of the Maya is being recognized, Maya identity itself coming under closer scrutiny. The essential adaptiveness of Maya identity is noted by Watanabe (1995: 35-36), who goes on to suggest that pan-Mayanism is a logical extension of this. Like Smith, Watanabe (1995: 37-38) expresses concern that the essentialist identity espoused by pan-

Mayanists may prove too rigid and superficial to adequately represent local reality. The risk is that by promoting a few 'exotic' traits at the expense of a more inclusive and generalized, if amorphous, local identity, a schism may develop between the Maya intellectual leaders and their rural base, with the result that "[local] Maya may simply begin to take them [pan-Mayanists] for another Ladinised, if now Indianist, elite doing what Ladinos have always done—dictating to Maya what they are and how they should behave" (Watanabe 1995: 38). This concern is well-founded, and it appears that a good deal of tension and slippage will always exist between local realities and pan-Maya essentializations, though this need not result in a general lack of support at the local level, unless the pan-Maya agenda were to in some way come into direct conflict with local interests. Watanabe (1995: 39-40) proposes a solution which relies upon the development of a kind of Maya anthropology directed and conducted by the Maya themselves. This would not only deepen pan-Mayanists understanding of local variants of Maya culture, resulting in a more flexible if practical construction of identity, but help guarantee strong connections between rural and urban Maya, providing pan-Mayanists with a greater legitimacy than they possess at present.

The importance of anthropology to pan-Mayanists is stressed by Warren (1992). Pan-Mayanists value the sort of knowledge generated by ethnography, and seek to control or appropriate this in some way. For example, Sturm (1996) reports on the growing popularity of a revitalized style of hieroglyphic writing among Maya intellectuals, who learned this skill from western academics. Warren (1992: 206-207) notes how ideas regarding the use of anthropology differ between western academics and pan-Mayanists in the context of a discussion of the Mayan Studies Permanent Seminar in which she participated in 1989:

> One of the most telling parts of the Mayan studies seminar was the closing remark by Professor Demetrio Cojtí of the Universidad de San Carlos who said the appropriate role for North American anthropologists should be one of helping identify continuities in Mayan culture, the essential characteristics that make Mayas Mayan. This stood in stark contrast to what I had just concluded in my review of North American formulations of ethnicity and descriptions of Peruvian communities: that being Quechua in Peru or Mayan in Guatemala was whatever the populations were doing; that there was no essential Quechua or Mayan, no constant core, but rather a complex, ever changing self-authorship sometimes reweaving the past, sometimes rejecting it.

This tension between the expectations of certain pan-Mayanists and those of anthropologists is somewhat difficult to resolve. Watanabe's suggestion that this sort of essentializing anthropology—while valid—is something best left to pan-Mayanists themselves, is perhaps the safest route, though this should not result in North American anthropologists turning a blind eye to these issues. As he suggests, a dialogue must be established between these two currents of Maya thought in order to maintain the integrity of each. That this has already begun is evident in a recent volume edited by Edward F. Fischer and R. McKenna Brown (1996) which combines scholarship of pan-Mayanists with that of North American anthropologists. Scholars in this volume, and elsewhere, have described various aspects of pan-Mayanism, focussing in particular upon dress, language, politics, and education. The development of a pan-Maya spirituality has not been treated specifically to my knowledge. In the following section I discuss this relatively recent development, which has found a strong proponent in the ethnicity-based Maya organizations and institutions, who tend to view this cultural form as a particularly important aspect of the more general cultural revitalization they promote.

Maya Revitalization and the Growth of Pan-Maya Spirituality

Mesoamerican anthropologists have long considered religious belief and practice to be a central aspect of Maya culture in general. Community-based studies inevitably describe, in varying detail, the nature of religious life: in the past often emphasizing the prominent role of the civil-religious hierarchy (cf. Nash 1958); while at present, ethnographers tend to paint a more complex picture, stressing competition between various religious factions (cf. Carlsen 1997a; Watanabe 1992). A constant, if sometimes liminal figure in all these considerations has been the 'shaman'. Variously named 'shaman', '*zahorín*', '*chimane*', or to those less sympathetic, '*brujo*' or '*hechicero*' (witch and sorcerer, respectively), this individual may identify at present as a *sacerdote maya*, or 'Maya priest' in Spanish, or use the appropriate Maya title, such as *aj'kun* (Tz'utujil), *aj q'iij* (K'iche'/Mam). It is the *sacerdotes mayas* who have become active in developing and promoting a purified and essentialized pan-Maya spirituality, in tandem with larger efforts towards cultural revitalization. The individuals who fall into this category, however, vary considerably in their backgrounds do not always share a single vision of Maya religion. While the role of the shaman has traditionally been bounded by his or her community, at present many have made strong regional and national connections, the latter evidenced in the relatively recent formation of a National Council of Maya Priests. In this section, I will examine some of the dynamics of this movement, particularly as regards the form of spiritual orthodoxy being promoted at present, and reactions to Catholic attempts at inculturation. I conclude with an examination of the place of this movement within the larger Pan-Maya revitalization. To provide some context, I will begin with a brief examination of the 'traditional' role of the shaman within Maya communities.

While a complete summary of the nature of shamanism in Mesoamerica is perhaps beyond the scope of this study, a brief introduction to some of its core attributes will serve to situate the discussion that follows. In general, anthropologists have considered shamans the most 'traditional' practitioners of Maya religion, insofar as their practices seem the least influenced by Christianity. Shamans may in certain instances have a direct relation with the civil-religious hierarchy or *cofradías* in a given community, though more often their role is less institutionalized and informal. Different types of shaman have been identified by Watanabe (1992) in the Mam community of Santiago Chimaltenango, and more generally by Rupflin-Alvarado (1995).[14] Watanabe (1992: 188) distinguishes between the *aj q'iij*, individuals with traditional calendrical knowledge, and the more powerful *aj mees*, who are able to commune directly with powerful spiritual beings. The *aj q'iij* are the most numerous and common type of shaman, with their role largely defined in terms of practising divination. While the form of divination practised varies from individual to individual, the most common and presumably traditional method involves special red seeds, which form the core of each Maya priest's sacred bundle or *vara*. Watanabe (1992: 188) describes two forms of divination using seeds. The first involves the diviner addressing to the seeds yes-no questions related to the concerns of his or her client, then counting a randomly drawn handful of seeds to determine the answer: an even number indicating a positive response, odd indicating negative. The second method involves consulting the seeds with each question, and counting off a randomly selected number of seeds using the 20 sacred name-days of the Maya calendar. The nature (positive/negative) of the final day counted indicates the response to the question.

As described by Rupflin-Alvarado (1995: 166), *aj q'iij* are consulted for responses to specific and immediate concerns, and addition to divination may perform complex ceremonies—involving small animal sacrifices, sacred fires and prayers—to request divine intervention for specific purposes or to offer thanks to the ancestors and Maya deities. An *aj q'iij* is called to his or her vocation through a variety of signs, including dreams and sicknesses among others. One's birthdate as calculated in the Maya calendar is considered very important as regards one's destiny in general, and specifically as regards a shamanic calling. A common story involves a potential shaman ignoring all these signs, and as a consequence suffering all manner of misfortune and bad luck, typically including sicknesses, the loss of loved ones and the inability to keep a job. Through consultation with a shaman, these individuals are informed of their destiny and the fact that they will only be able to change their luck by becoming a shaman. The training period varies in length, but generally involves the memorization of the names and significance of the 260 days in the ceremonial Maya calendar, the *tzolkin*. Each day bears multiple meanings, and is thought to be controlled by a specific *nawal*—a spiritual being assigned to a wide range of phenomena and objects, including among others mountains, caves, rain, wind, fire, and cold, also often understood as an individual's animal familiar. In my experience, the term *nawal* was used to refer to all manner of attributes of the divine, specific and general, as they relate to the physical, experienced world (cf. Rupflin-Alvarado 1995: 74-75).

In addition to this calendrical knowledge, a variety of ceremonies are learned and performed by the novice, with respect to specific mountain shrines and altars that honour certain *nawales*. With successful completion of these ceremonies, the novice is initiated as a shaman during the five sacred days of *Wajxaquib B'atz'*. This period is considered the Maya New Year, as the short-count ceremonial calendar, the *tzolkin*—which consists of thirteen twenty day months—comes into synch with the solar calendar, the *haab*, through the addition of five more twenty day months, and ending with the five days of *Wajxaquib B'atz'*. During the initiation, the novice receives his or her *vara*, which contains 260 sacred red seeds, along with crystals, coins and other objects that serve to personalize each *vara*. After another forty days, during which the novice performs special ceremonies giving thanks to the ancestors and *nawales*, the he or she is considered an official shaman, and may begin to work independently from his or her master (Rupflin-Alvarado 1995: 169-171).

Carlsen and Prechtel (1994) provide a very useful discussion of shamanism in Santiago Atitlán, stressing that connections with 'official' *cofradía* religious structures are minimal. Only two of the *cofradías* in that town maintain an official position for shamans, one termed *nabeysil*, whose responsibility is defined in terms of the spiritual care of sacred bundles and who must remain celibate for as long as they hold the position, the other the *telinel* who performs a variety of ritual functions connected with the image of Maximón (Carlsen and Prechtel 1994: 86-88). They make the important point that shamans are not generally accorded the same respect which accrues to *cofradía* members, rather "shamans are individualistic and largely self-interested and hence, in a community-oriented society such as Santiago Atitlán, depending on the type of shamanism in question..., public acceptance ranges from simple distrust to violent rejection" (Carlsen and Prechtel 1994: 88). The type of knowledge these individuals possess is thus tacitly valued by many (including some Protestants), making shamanism something of a necessary evil in public perception.

In light of this fact that shamans in general have tended to operate on an individual basis, while the above description paints a general picture of the forms divination and initiation may take it is understandable that there is a great deal of variation in actual practice. Particularly as regards divination, I encountered the wide-spread use of tarot cards and even crystal balls. While ceremonies I witnessed tended to be very similar in essence, a good deal of variety seemed to exist as regards the types of offerings used, and some disagreement as to the essential nature (good or evil) of specific offerings like eggs and lemons. In actual practice, then, shamanism appears to be open to a variety of personal interpretations reflecting individual experiences and opinions. Some shamans freely combine elements of Catholicism into their rituals and prayers, while others refuse to make any reference whatsoever to non-Maya deities or notions. It is this latter group that has been working to purify and standardize Maya spirituality throughout Guatemala, and who seem the most receptive to and supportive of current strategies of cultural revitalization among Maya activists. In order to distinguish from these two types of shamans, I will use the term *sacerdote maya* in reference to the anti-syncretic religious practitioners who seek to purify Maya spirituality, and will use 'shaman' more generally to refer to religious specialists who do not necessarily see a problem in combining elements of Catholicism with Maya religion.

Through the course of my fieldwork, I interviewed a number of shamans from different communities and backgrounds. My main consultant was a 41 year old *sacerdote maya* from Cantel, Albino Santay Chojolán, who provided the most comprehensive overview of Maya spirituality, and introduced me to other Maya priests and religious specialists.

Although Albino had only been initiated as a shaman one or two years prior to our meeting, he has been active in promoting Maya spirituality as a legitimate alternative to other faiths. His personal history reads like a compendium of religious conflict and economic change in Guatemala. Albino's father was a Presbyterian, and his mother was well versed in traditional spirituality and practice, acting as a shaman before her marriage. Albino was fortunate enough to receive a good education, with the support and encouragement of his father who recognized the limits of subsistence farming. He excelled particularly in the fine arts, winning a variety of awards for his drawings and paintings. He holds a bachelor of science degree, a bilingual (K'iche'/Spanish) teaching certificate, a diploma from the National School of Plastic Arts, and continues his education through various correspondence courses. He belongs to a variety of Maya organizations, including the Association of Maya Writers of Guatemala (AEMG), of which he was vice-president, and the Academy of Maya Languages of Guatemala (ALMG), as well as a variety municipal and regional organizations including *Radio Fraternidad*—a K'iche' radio station based in Quetzaltenango—where he worked for several years as an announcer. He has worked for a variety of organizations translating their publications into K'iche', and serves as an editor for *Ajtzijonel*—the K'iche' supplement for the four-language weekly newspaper, *El Regional*. Albino has held a wide range of jobs through the years, including work in his parents and grandparents fields when young, apprenticeship as a tailor, work for 8 years in Cantel's textile factory, 5 years as a commercial artist, and the last 10 years as a bilingual (K'iche'/Spanish) teacher.

Throughout this experience, Albino has developed a strong pride in his K'iche' background, thus devoting himself to the general cultural revitalization of the Maya. He views his work as a bilingual teacher and his work with *Ajtzijonel* as particularly important in this regard, as the preservation of and growth of fluency in Mayan languages is thought to lie at the base of all further cultural revival. Albino came to embrace Maya spirituality following the death of his father, and stressed that he had always been generally uncomfortable with Christianity. Before recognizing his vocation as a *sacerdote maya*, he experienced a range of minor disasters in terms of health and economics, which he interpreted as resulting from a failure on his part to follow his destiny. After years of apprenticeship under his mother, who, as mentioned above, had practised as a shaman before marrying, combined with tutelage from his late uncle, Don Santos Pum—one of the Cantel's most respected shamans—and independent study through reading about Maya cosmovision and cosmogony, Albino recently received his *vara* and began practising publicly. As part of his training, he was required to perform ceremonies at 13 sacred locations, honouring their respective *nawales*. He has since made a point of talking to and observing older, more experienced practitioners, so as to compare their practice with his. More recently, his experience with members of the National Council of Maya Priests—and unintentionally through his work with myself—has convinced him of the need to purify Maya spirituality, to bring it closer in line with the beliefs and practices of the ancient Maya, consciously rejecting Christian influences that have accumulated through the years.

Central to this project for Albino and like-minded *sacerdotes mayas*, is a conscious and consistent use of proper Maya language in prayer and ritual, avoiding all references to *Dios*, *Jesucristo*, the Saints or other obvious Christian accretions. Albino noted that perfectly legitimate alternatives to Christian concepts of the divine exist within Maya spirituality, and moreover that these alternatives speak more directly to indigenous history and reality. Instead of praying to 'Our Father who art in heaven', the conscious Maya priest prays to the Heart of the Sky and Heart of the Earth, and to specific *nawales* of the mountains, wind, rain, etc. For Albino, there is something inherent in Maya languages, in his case K'iche', that facilitates better than any other medium the expression of deep meanings and values of Maya spirituality. He notes that he has tried to pray in Spanish, but it was simply not effective. He even went as far as to suggest that Spanish is only effective for those who engage in witchcraft. He considered shamans who pray extensively in Spanish to have sold out to an extent: trading in their heritage in order to attract Ladino clients.

Beyond correct language use, attention to other core aspects of Maya spirituality are stressed. The *tzolkin*, or ceremonial calendar, forms the concrete basis for contemporary ritual and prayer among the Maya, its observance appears to be undergoing something of a revival at present. All *sacerdotes mayas* are expected to understand the workings of this calendar, and to incorporate its meaning into all ceremonies and prayers. The centrality of the *tzolkin* in Maya spirituality was driven home to me during an interview with Macario Zabala Can, *sacerdote maya* and president of FODIGUA (*Fondo de Desarollo Indigena Guatemalteco*), a bipartisan agency devoted to the promotion of Maya culture, founded in 1993 with strong support from the APM. At the outset, once Macario realized that I was interested in Maya spirituality, he immediately began questioning me about my birthdate and related information, so as to give me a quick reading of my destiny as foretold in the *tzolkin*. He went on to show me pictures of other foreigners he's instructed, including—coincidentally—a photo of a group of Colombian backpackers I had met previously during a bus ride. These backpackers were very much interested in Maya spirituality, and the *tzolkin* in particular, as contributing to their personal spiritual growth from what I interpreted as a distinct New Age perspective. It took some time to explain to Macario that I was interested in more general issues. The importance and centrality of the *tzolkin*, however, was made clear to me.

More generally, as regards ceremonies, the standard form these take involves a sacred fire, on to which various offerings are thrown while the shaman intones long, formulaic prayers. I offer the following description of a ceremony Albino performed for me to bless my work and ensure success, as one such example. This ceremony took place at a small shrine on the side of one of Cantel's surrounding mountains, this particular spot associated with the deer *nawal*. The shrine consisted of a small concrete cross set into a grotto in the mountainside, with a relatively level space in front of it where offerings could be left and ceremonies performed. Albino cleared a space and traced a circle into the ground which he quartered and blessed with a kiss. This circle was filled with *copal* pellets (a traditional incense), on top of which were laid bundles of coloured candles (13 in each bundle) corresponding to the cardinal directions: red to the east, black to the west, white to the north and yellow to the south. On top of these was placed a bundle of blue candles which served to centre the space. Rosemary was placed around the circle as a border, and incense was sprinkled over the offerings. Cigarettes were arranged in a circle on top of the candles, and halved lemons were placed at each cardinal point, with two lemon halves placed by the cross along with a small effigy of San Simón. Two yellow candles were set up to the left of the cross, and two white candles to the right. Finally, a ring of chocolate was placed in the centre, along with a large amount of *cuilco* (another traditional incense).

The ceremony began with Albino praying in K'iche', explaining these prayers as a petition for success in my research, and protection from harm, to ensure that all would go smoothly through the course of research and beyond. The candles were lit, and the little mountain of offerings soon blazed up. He continued praying almost exclusively in K'iche', with occasional references in Spanish to 'The Heart of the Sky and the Heart of the Earth', and the formulaic repetition '*nada recibir*, *nada aceptar*' (receive nothing, accept nothing). While tending the fire, he occasionally threw on additional cigarettes. Eventually he pulled out a small booklet and read out a list of names in K'iche', referring to specific *nawales*, also naming a great number of San Simóns from different locations. He mentioned specific forms of transportation I was to take during my research, asking for protection during travel. He threw on more incense and then some sesame seeds, which he noted were particularly effective in obtaining money. I was asked to throw some sesame seeds on the fire as well, while Albino continued praying—this time referring specifically to myself and my work. He passed a lemon over my body, explaining that it provides protection from hidden enemies, then threw it into the centre of the fire. More sesame seeds, incense and cigarettes were added to the blaze, before half of a 125 ml bottle of *aguardiente* (cane liquor) was sprinkled on the fire in each of the four directions, and on the effigy of San Simón. I was given the remainder to drink, while Albino prayed, stirring up the fire, outlining a circle then quartering it. After about a hour, the fire died down then went out entirely, after which Albino concluded the ceremony, making a final cross over the ashes and kissing the ground. He blessed the site with his *vara*, and likewise blessed the money (Q.50, about $10 Can.) I gave him for the ceremony, a price agreed upon earlier.

While traditionally taking place at such special mountain shrines and other private places, this type of ceremony has recently moved into public spaces. An example of this includes a large ceremony, involving around 100 *sacerdotes mayas* from across the country, held in October 1996 to inaugurate the National Council of Maya Priests (founded under the auspices of FODIGUA), which took place at the archaeological site *Kaminal Juyú* in Zone 7 of the capital city. In addition to the *sacerdotes mayas*, present were government officials including the Minister of Culture and Sports and the Vice President, officials from other agencies such as FODIGUA, and the press (Prensa Libre 1996: 94). More generally, Maya organizations often hold such public ceremonies to emphasize their strong connections with Maya spirituality (cf. Bastos and Camus 1996: 98). The *sacerdotes mayas* who officiate these ceremonies invariably sympathize with projects of cultural revitalization, and in my experience differ in their practice with older shamans. One of the most striking differences I observed in ritual performance was the comparative assertiveness and performative nature of the ceremonies of this new generation of *sacerdotes mayas* when contrasted with those of older priests. While my data in this regard is not systematic, I did notice a clear difference here. Younger priests tended to pray with a great deal of confidence, making much more elaborate gestures and speaking in loud, often rapid, assured voices, while their older colleagues tended to be much more conservative and humble in their ceremonies, speaking slowly and methodically, often barely above a whisper. While I admit that a reason for this difference may simply be a function of age, I believe it also illustrates an important characteristic of this new generation of *sacerdotes mayas*: they tend to be very confident and authoritative in their belief and practice.

As in the past, it seems that by and large *sacerdotes mayas* in Guatemala generally work in the capacity of part-time religious specialists, relying more heavily upon other sources of income for subsistence. This was the case with Albino, who—as mentioned above—works as a bilingual teacher and editor for a local K'iche' newpaper. There is evidence, however, that some *sacerdotes mayas* are managing to maintain full-time employment from their calling. Such was the case with a shaman in Cantel, who runs a consulting business in what he terms 'spiritual sciences'. Beyond strictly Maya spirituality, this individual considers himself an astrologist in general, and makes copious use of western occult paraphernalia, including crystal balls and tarot cards. He has even brought San Simón back to Cantel, maintaining his image in his receiving room. Albino was rather critical of this gentleman, as he thought it unethical to commercialize Maya spirituality in this manner. Another example is that of Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, a *sacerdote maya* from Momostenango who has been active in publicizing and defining Maya spirituality. Itzep likewise operates a consulting business—*La Misión Maya*—in his town, though his focus seems strictly 'Maya' in orientation (Itzep 1995: 274).

As far as the level of organization of Maya priests is concerned, at the time of my research I was only aware of the National Council of Maya Priests associated with FODIGUA, but have since discovered references to various other groups, including one associated with *Majawil Q'ij* founded in 1992, and the Association of Maya Priests of Guatemala (ASMG) (Bastos and Camus 1996: 98; Prensa Libre 1996: 94). From what I have been able to gather, the council associated with FODIGUA is the largest and most representative, and includes members from these other organizations. As noted above, the goal of these organizations and individuals is the purification of Maya spirituality, seeking to establish strong links with ancient maya religious practice and belief. An obstacle towards this is identified in terms of shamans who freely mix elements of Christianity within their practice. This is viewed universally as corrupting and counter-productive. Albino continually made pains to distinguish 'true' *sacerdotes mayas*, such as himself, from those he labelled '*quemadores*' (people who merely 'burn'). This latter group are considered to be 'in it for the money', and more prone to witchcraft and evil than the *sacerdote maya*, whose path is clearly delineated as maintaining balance in nature and working for peace and unity.

These non-purists are routinely blamed for the bad reputation *sacerdotes mayas* have carried in the eyes of Ladinos and some Maya. One of the clear goals of the National Council of Maya priests is to tidy up this image, to present the *sacerdote maya* as one who acts wholly within the sphere of good, particularly stressing strong connections with the environment and Mother Earth. Another obstacle is conceived of in terms of older shamans, who are credited with keeping Maya spirituality alive, but tacitly criticized for the syncretic nature of their practices. This point is made by Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac (1995: 270) in an interview published by Dominican priests in their journal *Alternativas*:

> To speak the truth, there are two types of *sacerdotes mayas*: first those who proceed traditionally, those elders who are maintaining the Tradition. These individuals transmit what they've learned, perhaps not knowing where it came from, after 500 years, perhaps they aren't aware of the syncretism that has resulted. But what is very important is that they're maintaining a Tradition. As regards the new generations, we're trying to distinguish what is originally ours from that which isn't, we're separating the two. This isn't to say that we're starting a fight. For example, when I go to a church, I have to show respect, I have to do what I have to do. We are trying to purify that

which is originally maya so as to see clearly what it is we have.[15]

Others are not so diplomatic in their considerations of those Maya priests who blend traditions. Macario was fairly derisive of such individuals, as was Albino at times. The intrinsic value and superiority of a pure Maya spirituality is patently obvious to these individuals. Albino considered the task of purification to be in the hands of a minority of 'conscious' Maya such as himself, and lamented the persistence of individuals who freely draw upon Christianity in their religious practice. He offered reasons for such indiscriminate blending as ranging from simple and innocent ignorance—as Itzep alludes to above in terms of elders—to a more insidious and base motivation to attract clients from the ranks of Ladinos. Such individuals are thought by Albino to prostitute their spirituality, shaping it to fit the needs of the client so as to ensure satisfaction, motivated strictly by their greed and caring little for the 'true' spiritual path of the Maya. While generally respecting elders, Albino seemed to feel that they may not be of as much use in understanding the true roots of Maya spirituality as other like-minded (and younger) *sacerdotes mayas*. This point was made clear to me after a visit to San Simón's shrine in San Andrés Xecul. We concluded our visit with a brief ceremony in the patio of the home that housed the image, where two other shamans were busy performing ceremonies. One was quite young (younger than Albino), and was engaged in a loud and elaborate ceremony which I interpreted as requesting divine intervention for his client in securing a job (the *sacerdote maya* made copious use of the classified section from a national newspaper). The other was very old, and was quietly and reverently performing what appeared to me to be a much simpler ceremony. While neither of us were able to hear exactly what the older gentleman was saying (in K'iche'), Albino later deduced that he was engaged in witchcraft. He offered little evidence for this, it was merely an impression he had. I, however, was unable to detect anything significantly different in the nature of the older man's ceremony from others I had witnessed that would have led me to believe he was engaged in anything of the sort. While I defer to Albino's experience in this regard, I offer this as an example of what might be considered a generational rift between older and younger shamans. In Albino's case, at least, while older shamans are generally treated with respect and valued for their experience and knowledge, he is also somewhat suspicious of their practices and prefers to ally himself with younger, like-minded *sacerdotes mayas*, or older shamans whom he knows more intimately.

Another obstacle facing this new generation of *sacerdotes mayas* is the inculturation program of the Catholic Church discussed in chapter one. Attempts at inculturation are considered to fly in the face of efforts at purification of Maya spirituality. While occasionally sympathetic to individual priests, such as Padre Tomás, the aims and objectives of their program are challenged at the core. Macario saw attempts at inculturation as representing little more than a desperate and artificial attempt to maintain power by a Church losing ground to competing faiths. In his words:

> The Catholic religion has contaminated Maya religion a great deal. This is because the priest [Catholic] is always saying that 'you must perform your Maya prayer, you must perform your Maya ceremony' but this is so people don't simply leave mass. This is what they're doing...they use the marimba in mass now, they use other indigenous instruments, but it's in order to maintain the indigenous in church. It's a politics of the Church, that they can manage and maintain [the Maya]. In order that they come and conform to the Church, Priests use the Maya's autochthonous instrument. But in the long run, we'll end up in the same situation as always.

Albino was less critical of this project, as he viewed it solely in terms of the efforts of Padre

Tomás, the parish priest in his town. He viewed Padre Tomás as an exception to most priests, and didn't see his efforts as threatening. A major reason for this is that he considered such efforts as very small scale in nature, and not overtly political. Knowing Padre Tomás personally, Albino considered him to be fairly sincere in his endeavours, and respectful of the *sacerdote maya*'s right to autonomy. For Albino, it was something of a feather in the hat of the conscious *sacerdote maya* that local Catholicism is waking up to the intrinsic value of Maya religion. At the core, however, he figured that in order for a Maya to be truly 'pure' and faithful to his or her roots, a decision must be made to reject foreign influences. This decision is a personal one, and Albino suggests that the role of Maya priests such as himself consists in offering advice and guidance when called upon, and above all continuing to purify and publicly practise their spirituality, with the hope of awakening this potential within their Maya neighbours. Itzep (1995: 272) concurs, suggesting that the *sacerdote maya* cannot "say to the people 'don't do that, that isn't ours', such has to be born within them. You can't coerce people, force things on them, you have to be respectful...We have to prepare a [religious] purity so that people might find a desire to enter into this spirituality. It's their decision to participate or not. If we don't do that [i.e. if we force our spirituality on people] we would be falling into the same strategy the Spanish used on us"[16]

For Albino, while attempts at inculturation are laudable, they are doomed to failure. He stressed that by introducing, or re-introducing, Maya spirituality into local official religious life, Padre Tomás simply gives credit to the veracity of Maya beliefs. Once people fully perceive the validity of this tradition, they will have no need to hang on to Christian elements. It is as though the Church were shooting herself in the foot, as Itzep (1995: 271) alludes to, insofar as it sacrifices a good deal of its hegemonic legitimacy through highlighting the authenticity of the Maya system of belief: "Up to a certain point the Catholic Church is losing its purity, because they're including aspects of Maya religion so as to not lose their force or so as the people don't lose faith."[17] For such practitioners as Albino, Macario and Itzep, however, the legitimacy and authenticity of Maya spirituality is a given, and they suggest that this is recognized in private by many Protestant and orthodox Catholic Maya. Albino recounted how he was often approached by Protestants in secret to perform special ceremonies for them when their lives were going particularly poorly. Carlsen and Prechtel (1994: 88) describe a comparable scenario in Santiago Atitlán. Itzep (1995: 271) offers a similar example, suggesting moreover that through the years, a core of Maya belief and practice has laid at the root of all subsequent religious syncretisms, and during times of crisis its value is recognized by all:

> In this new Christian-Maya identity, Maya religion is the mother, the matrix, the base, it's deeper than Christian elements. I know Protestant pastors and Catholic leaders who can't publicly practise Maya religion, they keep it hidden, but when they have problems with their congregations, they come to us, they ask our help, they ask for ceremonies.[18]

Thus, Maya spirituality, like a pan-Maya identity, is thought to lie latent at the root of all indigenous experience and daily life, even among those considered most anti-traditional: Protestants and *catequistas*. With such legitimacy, even superiority, of their traditions assured, its no wonder that *sacerdotes mayas* like Albino and Itzep do not feel particularly threatened by inculturation—they merely co-opt it. The inculturation strategy is of little use in actually attracting such individuals into the Church, serving instead to confirm their existing belief system and practice. The true authorities of Maya spirituality are still considered to be the *sacerdotes mayas*, no matter how much of that tradition is filtered into local Catholicism, and indeed their authority grows the more the Catholic priest lends credence to their beliefs. The usefulness of inculturation to the Catholic Church is thus questioned by such *sacerdotes Maya*s, who see it as better serving their own interests. Where such nuances are not recognized, as was the case with Macario, this strategy of the Church is viewed with hostility, as representing nothing more than a power play. In either case, the theoretical basis for inculturation comes under direct and powerful criticism. As it is, the main source of support these Catholic priests may draw upon in regards to this project comes not from Maya purists like Albino, but rather from those shamans and *cofrades* who see no problem in blending elements of Christianity with Maya spirituality. It is here that the program of inculturation comes into direct conflict with that of Maya seeking to purify their traditions, as the former, in order to be successful, depends upon the support of the same population that the latter seeks to passively 'convert' to a more pure, orthodox Maya spirituality, thus throwing the two parties into direct competition. Neither program, however, has reached the degree of maturity that might bring this conflict to the fore.

This new generation of *sacerdotes mayas* may soon reach this level, however, in light of the growing importance they seem to be achieving within the more general Maya revitalization movement. Besides the direct associations which exist between councils of Maya priests and Maya organizations, such as FODIGUA, a stronger connection can be seen in the emphasis placed upon Maya spirituality by Maya activists in general. Maya cosmovision and religious practice is strongly accented, along with language and dress, in the pan-Maya identity these activists construct. Little disagreement exists between popular and ethnic activists in this regard, all are able to concur that such traits most clearly represent Maya culture in general. Even non-Maya agree with this formulation, as evidenced in the fact that during the process of developing documents regarding indigenous rights and identity, issues regarding the nature of Maya culture proved the least contentious, conflict arose only as regards specific political rights. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that the official agreement signed between the URNG and the Government contains two sections relating specifically to Maya spirituality and sacred geography, which I reproduce here.

> **§3/c. Spirituality**
> 1. The importance and uniqueness of Maya spirituality as a an essential component of Maya cosmovision and the transmission of values is recognized, as well as that of other indigenous peoples.
> 2. The Government promises to ensure respect towards the exercise of this spirituality in all its manifestations, in particular the right to practise it, in public and private, through teaching, worship and observance. The importance of indigenous spiritual guides as well as ceremonies and sacred places is likewise recognized.
> 3. The Government will place before the Congress of the Republic a reform to article 66 of the Political Constitution of the Republic with the aim of stipulating that the State recognizes, respects and protects the distinct forms of spirituality practised by the Maya, Garifuna and Xinca peoples.
>
> **d. Temples, Ceremonial Centres and Sacred Places**
> 1. The historical value and current importance of temples and ceremonial centres as part of the cultural, historical and spiritual inheritance of the Maya and other indigenous peoples is recognized.
> **Temples and Ceremonial Centres Situated in Zones (such as Archaeological) Protected by the State**
> 2. Conforming with the Political Constitution of the Republic, temples and ceremonial centres of archaeological value form part of the national cultural patrimony. As such, they are goods of the State and must be protected. In this context, it must be guaranteed that this precept is not violates in the case of temples and ceremonial centres located or discovered on private property.
> 3. The right of the Maya, Garifuna and Xinca peoples to participate in the conservation and administration of these places is recognized. To guarantee this right, the Government promises to promote, with the participation of the indigenous peoples, legal means that will result in a redefinition of the

> entities of the State responsible for this function, thus making this right effective.
>
> 4. Regulations regarding the protection of ceremonial centres in archaeological zones will be modified so that such regulations enable the practise of spirituality and do not constitute an impediment to the exercise of same. The Government will promote, in conjunction with indigenous spiritual organizations, a set of regulations that permits access to said ceremonial centres, guaranteeing the free practise of indigenous spirituality within the conditions of respect required by the spiritual guides.
>
> **Sacred Places**
>
> 5. The existence of other sacred places where indigenous spirituality is traditionally exercised, in particular that of the Maya, and the need to protect these is recognized. Towards this, a commission including representatives of the Government, indigenous organizations, and indigenous spiritual guides will be created to define these places as well as the plan to preserve them.[19]
> (United Nations 1995: 15-17)

Thus, through the pressure of Maya activists, Maya spirituality has been given official state recognition, as have 'indigenous spiritual organizations' and 'indigenous spiritual guides' who are called on directly to aid in the implementation and elaboration of this agreement. In defining their position, the new generation of *sacerdotes mayas* have worked towards the establishment of a form of spiritual orthodoxy, supposedly free of foreign influences. While admitting that much work remains to be done, it appears this work is conceived of in terms of convincing the bulk of shamans to conform to this purified spirituality as opposed to discovering new, deeper and more authentic expressions of Maya belief. Included in the core of this spiritual orthodoxy, as mentioned above, is the observation of the *tzolkin* and the correct performance of ceremonies, as well as an understanding of Maya creation as recorded in the *Popol Vuj*, which has likewise become a very important text for young Maya priests, repeatedly referred to as their bible. As regards 'correct' performance of Maya ceremonies, a strict set of guidelines has been developed by one group of *sacerdotes* *mayas*, which explicitly lays out the form and structure of a legitimate Maya ceremony, defining what materials are to be used as well as their significance, the type of prayers to be said, as well as correct sacred apparel for a Maya priest, correct music, and correct food to consume following the ceremony. In addition, a list of prohibitions and norms required of *sacerdotes mayas* is provided, all with the explicit aim of revitalizing and purifying Maya spirituality.[20]

Thus, while the *sacerdotes mayas* I spoke with all described their project of purification in terms of a long-term goal, in actuality it seems as though they have met the majority of these goals in practise. The real challenge, as mentioned above, is conceived of in terms of standardizing religious practice among Maya who are not currently 'purists'. This is recognized by Itzep (1995: 272) as the long-term goal of the new generation of *sacerdotes mayas*, a goal impeded by older 'traditionalists' who make no attempt to systematize their beliefs:

> The traditional priests don't have their elements, their ceremonies organized. It's as if I were to ask someone for a fruit and they give me a pip, in reality they didn't give me what I asked for. But there they are, and they have their values, their elements, they have to be organized. That these traditional priests will organize their thoughts, the Maya theology, I doubt. We will have to wait for 50 years at least. Even today many are ordained as *sacerdotes mayas* and continue to fall into syncretism. There's a new generation of Maya priests who attend to the purification of the religion. These individuals are the seed that must bear fruit.[21]

Albino expressed the same sentiments, stressing that the option to perform ceremonies and express beliefs in a more pure Maya form already exists. It is a matter of convincing individuals to follow this path. In this regard, I was interested in discovering whether or not FODIGUA's National Council of Maya Priests has made any efforts at regulating *sacerdotes* *mayas* in the nation, so as to guarantee a more orthodox priesthood. As it is, this is not one of the mandates of that organization, and while Macario admitted that non-pure shamans exist and present a problem, a solution in terms of establishing official regulations is not considered at present. For now, the Council simply encourages more shamans to join and to become aware of its activities, so as to perhaps foster a general conscience-raising among *sacerdotes mayas* in general, leading them to individually critically evaluate their spirituality and hopefully subscribe to the pure, orthodox form being promoted.

The future for *sacerdotes mayas* and Maya spirituality is considered to be a bright one. Albino talked of plans to one day construct a new Maya temple as a testament to the re-birth of Maya spirituality, though Macario remarked that a great deal of work would have to go into the planning of such a structure (particularly taking into account astronomical considerations), making this a long-term goal. In general, the priests with whom I talked concurred in stating that Maya prophecy marks this period as the beginning of a new age, a new cycle in which the Maya will again attain glory and ascendance in their country. Albino specifically predicted that the next national government would be 'Maya', without suggesting concretely how this would come about (for example, he was unaware of any current political parties that effectively represent the Maya). More generally, Albino suggested that many of the entrenched political, economic and environmental problems plaguing the nation will be rectified in the new Maya order. Specifically regarding the environment, pollution, use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers and deforestation would be eliminated as entirely incompatible with Maya cosmovision with respect to the treatment of Mother Earth. These types of statements seem to reflect Wallace's (1956) classic work on revitalization movements, and are echoed most clearly in a manifesto produced by a group of indigenous priests and elders from accross the continent who met in Panajachel, Guatemala in November 1995. This group, while reflecting a clear Maya majority, also included representation from other aboriginal groups fromt the Americas, and in their manifesto announce the following return to past glory:

> With profound respect we salute our original peoples and their political and spiritual authorities and announce to them that the Great Council of Wise Scientists which in ancient times oriented the life of our peoples in accordance with the laws of the sky and the earth contained in our ceremonial calenders, has been reestablished. That Council which for more than five centuries remained silent for inevitable circumstances in a time of darkness and cruelty which happily is already dead. The Council is now reborn with the name of CONTINENTAL COUNCIL OF ORIGINAL ELDERS AND PRIESTS OF AMERICA, to give fulfillment to the prophecies our venerable wise people and spiritual guides in these times, prophecies that we confirm with human and natural events which in all areas reverberate in our lives.[22]

While the specifics of such changes and prophecies are very much uncertain at present, a growth in ethnic consciousness is clearly underway, and will undoubtedly serve to alter in many ways national and local realities. In this regard, anthropologists will have to re-examine many of their assumptions as regards the nature of indigenous identity in Guatemala, as well as the basic practise of culture among the Maya.

It seems clear then that the closed corporate community formulation has blinded scholars to the significance of intra-ethnic solidarity. It is important to recognize that Maya from various communities have a great deal in common, that they do not constitute entirely distinct entities with little to no potential for unity, historically and at present. The evidence I have presented in this chapter has demonstrated that ethnic unity has emerged as a powerful force. That said, it is important to note that differences (ideological and otherwise) do indeed exist between Maya—as noted above, for example, in terms of conflict between popular and 'ethnic' Maya organizations, as well as between communities. The following chapter will continue with an examination of Maya spirituality and religious syncretism in the context of one particularly contentious element—the cult of San Simón—demonstrating further some of the divisions between *sacerdotes mayas* and shamans, as well as the ways in which these differences have been reconciled to a degree. The position, or positions, of the Catholic Church as regards this cult will likewise be examined, as San Simón seems to represent something of a dilemma to both traditional orthodox Catholics, and those engaged in inculturation. The importance of considering relations between communities will be further highlighted in terms of the following analysis of San Simón, as the cult is truly inter-regional in nature. This discussion will serve to shed more light on the contentious nature of religious practice in Guatemala, as well as outline some of the ways in which unity among specific players is achieved or imagined.

Chapter Three

Syncretism, Anti-syncretism and the Problem of Community: Religious Conflict and the Cult of San Simón in Guatemala

> From Judas' words it would appear that he knew everybody, and that everyone he knew had at some time in his life committed an evil act or even a crime. In his opinion, good people was the name given to those who knew how to conceal their deeds and thoughts; but if one were to embrace such persons, speak kindly to them and question them closely, out from them would flow, like pus from a pierced sore, every sort of falsehood, vileness and lie. He readily agreed that he himself sometimes lied, but he asserted with an oath that others lied more than he did, and that if in the world there was anyone who had been deceived it was he, Judas. It happened that certain persons had many times deceived him, in this manner or that. Thus, the treasure-keeper of a certain wealthy magnate had once confessed to him that for ten years he had constantly been desiring to steal the treasures entrusted to him, but had not been able to as he feared the magnate and his own conscience. And Judas had believed him. And all of a sudden the man had stolen, and so deceived Judas. And all deceived him, even the animals: when he caressed a dog it bit his fingers, and when he beat it with a stick the dog licked his feet and looked up into his eyes like a daughter. He had killed the dog, buried it in a pit and even rolled a heavy stone on top, but who knew?—perhaps because he had killed the dog it had become even more alive, and was not lying in the pit but running around merrily with the other dogs.
>
> Leonid Nikolayevich Andreyev, *Judas Iscariot*

While the general nature of current and historical religious conflict in Guatemala has been outlined in previous sections, the examination of the cult of San Simón which follows serves to situate the various players considered above in terms of their differing relations to this specific tradition. As will be seen, San Simón is a very ambiguous figure in popular tradition as well as anthropological discussion, and is currently undergoing something of a transformation at the hands of the *sacerdotes mayas* in line with the more general cultural and political revitalization discussed above. The complexities and variation inherent in this tradition will be unraveled to an extent, highlighting the differing ideologies and interpretations which more or less characterize each player, throwing further light on the depth and nature of religious division in the nation. The general association between San Simón and Judas Iscariot will be discussed at length, with particular attention paid to the ambiguous nature of Judas in both orthodox and popular Christianity. I will then consider the current redefinition of San Simón advanced by the *sacerdotes mayas*, and problems this has encountered. This analysis will frame the concluding discussion which treats differing perceptions as regards the fundamental nature of good and evil which, I suggest, lies at the base of current religious conflict. The problematic nature of community-level identity and culture as regards both generalizations about the cult and its 'orthodox' re-interpretation by *sacerdotes mayas* will be highlighted throughout.

As an introduction to these issues, I first provide two brief historical case studies, mentioned in chapter one, which bring to the fore the nature of religious conflict between *costumbristas* and members of *Acción Católica* in the 1950s and 1960s, with specific reference to the cult of San Simón. In Santiago Atitlán and Cantel, religious conflict between traditionalists, Orthodox Catholics and Protestants was intense, though the outcome in each case differed. Both these communities maintained or maintain cults to San Simón, or Maximón, and this cult figured prominently in the disputes that ensued. Michael Mendelson (1957, 1965) describes the conflict that centred around the cult of Maximón in Santiago Atitlán in the 1950s. While Maximón had long been despised by Catholic authorities, and attempts had been made to destroy the figure, it was not until the 1950s that these attempts came close to succeeding. Maximón is considered by many a variant of San Simón, and is an effigy, about three feet high, rudely constructed of a wooden core with the head adorned with a wooden mask. The figure is elaborately dressed in western clothing, with the exception of the pants, which are of the same type worn by local Atitecos (residents of Santiago Atitlán). The head is adorned with a large cowboy hat and scarves, with a cigar often placed in the mouth when libations of liquor are not being offered. The main function of Maximón in public ceremony occurs during Holy Week, where he plays an important part in local processions and ritual. It was in this capacity that Catholic authorities most strongly objected to Maximón, and sought to forcibly put an end to the cult.

In 1950, Padre Recinos, founder of the *catequista* movement in the town, attempted to destroy Maximón when he came to say mass. He ordered its removal from the *cofradía* Santa Cruz, where it was housed, and barred participation of Maximón in the Holy Week rituals. He returned on June 6th with two other priests, broke into the *cofradía* Santa Cruz, destroyed Maximón's head and stole two masks. These masks were replaced and worship resumed, though subsequent efforts to reinstate the figure's role in public ritual met with difficulty. A local shaman wired the President of the Republic in 1951, to ask permission to resume the ritual, and took Maximón to a small chapel at the end of the Church plaza. The priest complained that noise from the chapel disturbed him, and the figure was moved to the market close to where pigs were sold. The main complaints of the *catequistas* against Maximón were that it represented Judas Iscariot, worship of whom was deemed diabolical. While not denying this role, traditionalists stressed that the figure was harmless, and well-loved by villagers as well as by tourists. Traditionalists desperately wanted to reinstate the Maximón ritual, but failed to act decisively due to fear of the power of the *catequistas*, the president of which was also the local *alcalde* (Mendelson 1957: 28-30).

Intervention on behalf of the *cofradía* came from an unlikely source. In 1953, local Protestants organized and sent a petition to the President of the Republic, requesting that the Maximón rituals be reinstated, on the grounds of religious freedom and the figure's value as a tourist attraction. This freedom was granted, and Maximón resumed his important role in Holy Week celebrations. The Protestant group's motives were by no means linked to any general sympathy with the nature of the traditionalist's belief system, but were motivated by political interests. Protestants had supported the *Frente Popular Libertador* which started the revolution of 1944. This party splintered into many sub-parties, and Protestants ended up supporting a party which lost the local elections but remained, according to them, truer to the spirit of the revolution. The *Catequistas*, including their president (who was elected *alcalde* in 1952), supported the winning party, but were viewed as corrupt by Protestants. The *alcalde* was particularly singled out, as his actions in attempts to destroy the Maximón cult were thought to represent a conflict of interest, as he personally profited from the cult by selling pictures of Maximón to tourists. The strength of the *catequistas* was seriously weakened by this Protestant coup, and *catequista* officials elected to municipal government, including the *alcalde*, resigned shortly thereafter (Mendelson 1957: 30-38; 1965: 65-79). This episode highlights not only the changes wrought by Protestant and Catholic evangelization, but the growing importance of national party politics at the local level at the time of the Revolution.

This event represents something of an anomaly in the experience of most highland Maya communities, where traditionalists generally found themselves alone in their conflict with orthodox Catholics. Such was the case in Cantel at the same time, as described by McDowell (1974), where the efforts of orthodox Catholics to purge 'pagan' ritual and belief from local religious life encountered no resistance beyond that of the traditionalists. With the arrival in 1949 of Cantel's first resident priest since the 1870s, conflict between traditional religious authorities and the Catholic Church began immediately. The *mayordomo* of one of the *cofradías*, who was in possession of the keys to the church, refused to surrender these to the new priest. Only when the priest secured the support of municipal officials did the *mayordomo* relent. Among the first actions of the priest were the dismissal of traditional religious authorities responsible for church administration, and their replacement with a non-Canteleño sacristan and *fiscales* (church custodians). He denounced saint worship as paganistic, which led Canteleños to stage a general boycott of mass. The priest sought support among young factory workers—Cantel has had a large textile factory since 1876 (Nash 1958: 13)—and established an *Acción Católica* group which sought to bring local Catholicism closer in line with official Church teaching. He publicly denounced what he considered to be the wasteful expenditure of time and money of the *cofradías*, and encouraged a stricter devotion to church dogma as a superior expression of faith to the public drunkenness and great expense which characterized folk worship. This argument won a number of converts to *Acción Católica*, and weakened the traditionalists particularly in their efforts to secure new members to take on the burden of *cofradía* offices (McDowell 1974: 288-289).

A new priest arrived in 1951, and proved even more belligerent in stamping out 'pagan' beliefs. He also involved himself more directly in local politics, encouraging the formation of a peasant union, and supporting striking factory workers. During Holy Week celebrations in 1952, he looked with displeasure upon the long column of saints that were paraded through town and into the church, crowding parishioners out of the building. He was particularly offended by the accompanying drunkenness, and on Holy Thursday went as far as to ban entrance to the church to all but a few of the saint images. This caused a major conflict, with *cofrades* (male *cofradía* members) pleading with the priest to let them enter, to no avail, and finally issuing him death threats. This brought the *alcalde* and civil authorities into the dispute, local police sent immediately to protect the priest, later fortified with members of the national police who managed eventually to disperse the crowd (McDowell 1974: 291-292).

Further actions by this priest served to irrevocably weaken the strength of the *cofradías*: he banned all celebrations that continued past midnight; refused church entrance to any intoxicated person, even *cofrades* or *principales*, and even on holy days; recognized only three saint societies as legitimate (Justo Juez, Virgen de Dolores and Señor Sepultado), rejecting all others; and raised the fee to say a mass for any of the saints celebrated by unofficial *cofradías*. In 1953 the image of San Simón, maintained by the *cofradía* San Buenaventura, was discovered and publicly burned by members of *Acción Católica*. A replacement was soon made, but again discovered and burned. A third replacement was discovered and burned in 1959, and despite rumors in the late 1960s and early 1970s that the *cofradía* secretly maintained another image, the president of the *cofradía* denied this. The *cofradías* fought back, and tried to have their dispute resolved in the courts, to no effect. They even went as far as to invite a visiting priest into the *sala* of one of their homes, to discuss exactly what were the problems with their form of worship. This meeting quickly devolved into threats and accusations, and the national army had to be called in before the priest was released unharmed (McDowell 1974: 292-294).

Faced with continual pressure and dwindling support, *cofradías* began folding. A few joined the church as legitimate saint societies, their activities curtailed and under direct supervision. Two *cofradías*—San Buenaventura and Virgen de la Asunción (Cantel's patron saint)—chose to operate independently from the church, though, according to McDowell (1974: 294) their support dwindled and both had remained in the same house, under the direction of the same president for over a decade at the time of his research. Ironically perhaps, the biggest winners from this intense conflict proved to be the Protestant sects that had established bases in the town earlier in the century. The intense factionalism and divisions caused by the conflict led many to become disenchanted with Catholicism in general, resulting in a general increase in Protestant converts. The Protestants themselves, however, represented a rather divisive group. McDowell (1974: 296) offers a description of how general religious conflict resulted in further division within Protestant circles:

> ...the decline of the *cofradias* has not meant the end of factionalism. Catholics berate the Protestants for abandoning the true faith and leading others to religious error. Protestants condemn the Catholics for taking orders from Rome and for failure to allow the true spirit of the Lord to move them. Protestants have also taken to fighting among themselves. A familiar pattern is for newly-converted Protestants to choose the Presbyterian church of either branch [the Presbyterian church in Cantel divided in 1952 due to a dispute between the minister and his cousin]. Later, they will argue with the preacher over the interpretation of some biblical passage or the conduct of one's life, then either join the Pentacostals [sic] or other existing group [sic] or found one of their own. There are no fewer than a dozen of such local groups that have organized since 1966.

Thus, unlike Santiago Atitlán, Protestants in Cantel during this period were unable to display any kind of internal unity, contributing to a general climate of religious factionalism.

These two examples demonstrate how the cult of San Simón has been problematic for the local Catholic church, particularly in its most orthodox manifestation. Connections with Judas Iscariot are particularly troublesome, but so are other 'Maya' identities which are considered paganistic. These two types of identity, on more 'Christian' and one more 'Maya' accurately describe the types of interpretation which are commonly ascribed to the cult, and reflect the two strains of Mesoamerican anthropology (historicism and culturalism) identified by Watanabe (1990) as discussed in chapter one. A historicist interpretation would stress the cult's origins as rooted in the colonial experience, and Christianity in particular, while culturalist perspectives interpret the tradition as something of a survival of prehispanic religious forms.

I will attempt to combine both culturalist and historicist perspectives in the discussion which follows, admitting the validity and limitations of each, stressing in addition the problematic nature of community especially as regards pan-Maya spirituality and revitalization. Thus, in order to ground the discussion, I will consider in detail what might be considered a 'historicist' perspective regarding San Simón—his connections with Judas Iscariot and related traditions—followed by the 'culturalist' interpretations forwarded by the *sacerdotes mayas*. I do not pretend to offer any over-arching and totalizing interpretation of the tradition, precisely because consideration of community (as will be seen) problematizes both perspectives. Thus, while the nature of San Simón will remain ambiguous in the discussion which follows, such is necessary as San Simón is indeed a conflicted, multidimensional character when considered at the inter-community level. Such analysis is, however, useful in further defining the nature of both the current pan-Maya movement and inculturation theology—both 'culturalist' phenomena in many respects—as well as some of the problems they have encountered in terms of differences evinced at the local level.

Judas Iscariot in Orthodox and Popular Thought

At this point I will focus more generally upon the character of Judas Iscariot, considered above as one 'historicist' interpretation of San Simón's identity. I hope to show that the figure of Judas is in many ways ambiguous both within orthodox theological discourse and popular understanding. This ambiguity may explain how Judas may be considered, from a certain perspective, an ideal template for the syncretic processes which have informed the tradition of San Simón in all its local incarnations in Guatemala. I do not wish to suggest, however, that Judas represents the 'true' primordial identity of the image, and will treat alternate interpretations following this discussion. In addition I will outline official Catholic positions on San Simón, both the orthodox posture of the Church hierarchy, and an example of the more open perspective of priests concerned with inculturation. In each case, San Simón presents a problem, as associations with evil are difficult to reconcile with basic theological principles each player shares. Prior to this, I will outline further evidence suggesting connections between San Simón and Judas, highlighting the difference between specific traditions at the local (community) level where this connection has been placed under stress.

The most obvious association between Judas and San Simón or Maximón in ritual terms consists in the important role the image plays during Holy Week celebrations. While I have briefly treated the nature of this tradition above, a more thorough overview, relying upon the rich published material available from Santiago Atitlán, should prove useful. Maximón's most important role in public ceremonial life occurs during Holy Week, where he forms an important part of celebrations in Atitlán. While observation of the Maya Calendar in Atitán is in "sad shape" (Tarn and Pretchel 1986: 175) in this town, it has been suggested nonetheless that Holy Week is associated with the five days of *uayeb* at the end of the Maya year, previously discussed in terms of the *Wajxaquib B'atz'* ceremonies during which new *sacerdotes mayas* are initiated (Mendelson 1965: 137-138). Maximón's public role begins on Monday, when the *telinel*—an important member of the *cofradía*, charged with many specific ritual obligations relating to the image—takes Maximón's clothes to the lakeshore where they are ceremonially washed. On Wednesday Maximón is shouldered by the *telinel*, and taken to the town hall where he is laid in a circle of fruit shipped in from the pacific coast. Esoteric association with fertility and sex have been noted in regards to this ritual (Tarn and Pretchel 1990). Amidst drinking and celebration, Maximón is later carted

Plate 5: Santiago Atitlán's Maximón

Note the different appearance of Maximón from San Simón. Especially noteworthy are the traditional pants Maximón wears, of the same style as the Atiteco shaman shown here praying.

off to his own chapel located in a corner of the central plaza, adjacent to the church, where he is hung on a pole and decorated as a tree. *Cofrades* and other ritual specialists spend the two nights with the image, drinking, smoking, singing ritual songs, and performing ceremonies in an atmosphere of 'synesthesia', "a euphoric blending of the senses brought on by the intensity of sounds, smells, sights, liquor, and fatigue, occasionally [leading] to ecstatic wailing" (Carlsen 1997a: 155). Before dawn on Good Friday, the popular running of San Juan Carajo (Saint John the 'Prick') takes place, as young men carrying this image take turns racing it up to the image of his concubine or wife, María Andaloor, and "amidst shouts thrust their cargo phallically into the night sky" (Carlsen 1997a: 155). The climax of the week's celebrations occurs on Friday afternoon, when Maximón is brought into the plaza to greet the image of Señor Sepultado (Jesus in the Tomb). The *telinel* again shoulders Maximón, races to the waiting image of Jesus, bows to the four directions, then races off full speed back to the *cofradía* house. A month later the image is transferred to a new location, as part of its yearly circulation between *cofrades* (Carlsen 1997a: 152-157; cf. Mendelson 1965; Molina 1983). As may be gathered from the various elaborate and esoteric elements of these ceremonies, Judas Iscariot is by no means the most salient of Maximón's identities, though some connections may be seen—such as the hanging of the image, which may carry additional symbolism that speaks to Iscariot's death.

As Holy Week fell outside the period of my field research, I have little comparable data on celebrations in Atitlán or other towns considered so far. I did receive information on the role of San Simón in San Jorge la Laguna (a town across the lake from Santiago Atitlán), which confirms this image's important role during Holy Week. San Simón in this town represents one of the most interesting variations I have encountered. The image is maintained in a small cabinet, and consists only of two masks which are kept wrapped up throughout the year, uncovered only for Holy Week, where they are formed into a head which is attached to a body and seated in front of the church. The *cofradía* in charge of this image is Santa

Plate 6: San Jorge la Laguna's San Simón with Albino
The image is maintained in the cabinet shown here, and kept covered in a cloth for most of the year. Note the offerings of cigarettes, liquor and money.

Cruz, suggesting a strong connection between this tradition and that in Atitlán where a *cofradía* of the same name maintains Maximón. The Church in San Jorge, as in Atitlán, supports at least tacitly San Simón's tradition. As regards San Simón's image in San Jorge, connections with Judas seem apparent as the sculpted mask has the appearance of a hanged man, with an open mouth and protruding tongue, perhaps referring to one of the two manners in which Judas reportedly died as recorded in the Bible.

Plate 7: San Jorge la Laguna's San Simón assembled for Easter
Note San Simón's open mouth and protruding tongue. Present are important members of the Cofradía Santa Cruz.

It seems, however, that San Simón is not nearly as central to Holy Week celebrations in other parts of the country. In many cases, the most important ritual event for San Simón occurs on his saint day, October 28. In Zunil, the town with which I am most well-acquainted, San Simón's fiesta is celebrated amidst great fanfare, with music, fireworks, food and drink in abundance. Little in the way of formal ceremony occurs on this day, as it is thought best to let San Simón rest. *Sacerdotes mayas* from across the country do gather, however, and perform many small-scale, independent ceremonies, particularly making use of the sacred fire so central to Maya spirituality. On the evening of the 27th of October a group of *sacerdotes mayas* sponsored a Mariachi band to play in the saint's honour. San Simón does receive visitors on his feast day, who wait their turn in line to offer thanks and

Plate 8: Zunil's San Simón
San Simón is wearing standard attire in this photo. His open mouth, ready to recieve offerings of liquor, is shown. Generally *cofrades* keep his mouth covered with a cloth.

congratulations. A vast number of people from across Guatemala and southern Mexico converge upon Zunil for this day—I estimated upwards of a thousand people packed into the small courtyard of the *cofradía* house in 1996. The atmosphere is one of general unrestrained revelry, with men and women dancing to live marimba and mariachi bands, who play without a break the whole day. Celebrations continue for several days, with the final ceremonial transfer of the saint to his new home occurring on November 1—All Saints Day. On this day, the old *alcalde* of the *cofradía* dances a slow, ceremonial dance with San Simón on his back, covered in a cloth. His wife dances with him, as does the new *alcade* for the upcoming year. Eventually the image is transferred to the new *alcalde*, who likewise dances, holding the

Plate 9: The transfer of Zunil's San Simón on November 1
The outgoing *alcalde* dances with San Simón on his back covered in a cloth.

ceremonial staff of office, before San Simón makes his transfer to his new location. Similar festivities occur in other towns, including San Andrés Xecul, San Andrés Itzapa, and Xela, though the saint in these towns is not transferred yearly. According to the information I was able to secure, San Simón plays no major public role during Holy Week in these towns.

Xela's San Simón, or Judas Iscariot as he is officially denominated, has a smaller

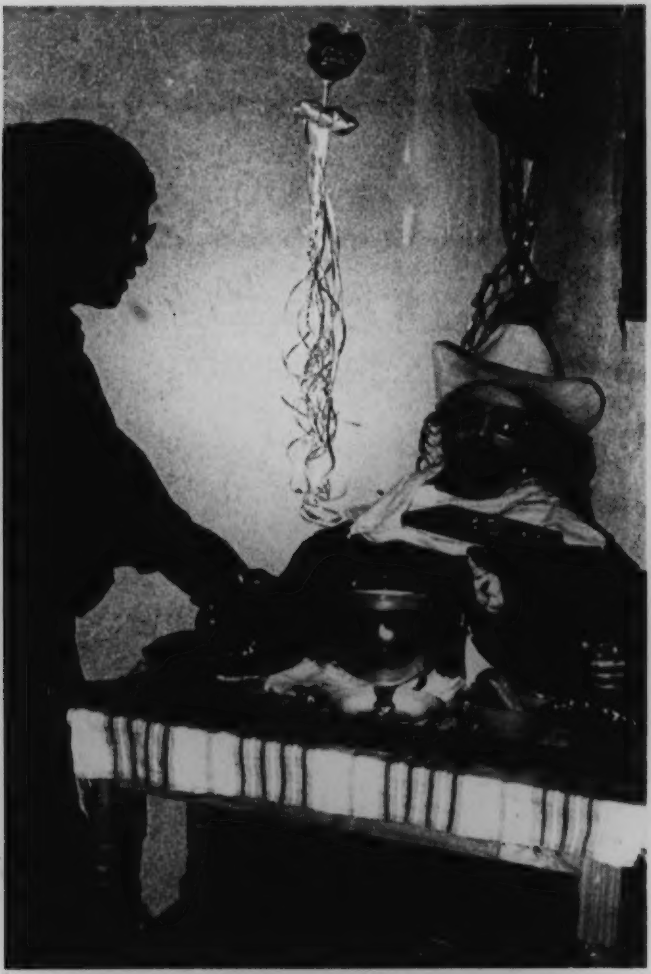


Plate 10: Xela's Judas Iscariot and Albino
Note the small statue of Saint Jude on the table in front of Judas.

celebration in his name on October 28th, as festivities in nearby Zunil steal the spotlight for the day. Xela's image is less well-known, and the only one I am aware of who's history is clearly delineated by his caretakers. According to a large sign dedicated in 1987, this society was founded in 1961. At that time, according to informants, the image consisted only of the head, and it was not until 1987 that the present body was constructed. Ritual traditions associated with this society seems to place it somewhere in between the two extremes outlined above. Xela's San Simón plays a role on Holy Saturday, during which time—according to informants—he "rests" while celebrations and ceremonies occur in his name. Thus, both October 28th and Holy Week are more or less important ceremonial occasions in this tradition, whereas in other cases only one of the two assumes great importance.

I suspect a reason for this divergence in ritual function of San Simón images may lie in the differing attitudes of local parishes to the tradition. While I have established above San Simón's general connections with Judas and associated celebrations during Holy Week, it seems that such participation in these ceremonies only occurs in towns where the local church is not overly hostile to the tradition. In other cases, where Holy Week is not an important ceremonial event in the image's yearly ritual cycle, it seems likely that this came to be the case due to church hostility, perhaps barring participation of San Simón in Easter celebrations. In such cases, a new date had to be chosen to celebrate the saint, October 28th being the most obvious choice (the saint day of both the 'official' Saint Simon, and Saint Jude). Thus, in the latter cases direct associations with Judas have been severed to a degree, as the image no longer officially fulfills this ritual role during celebrations of the Passion.

This has not put an end to conceptions regarding San Simón's identity as Judas, however, pushing them instead below the surface. In Zunil and San Andrés Itzapa, San Simón was identified to me, albeit obliquely, as Judas, specifically in his capacity as "an apostle of Jesus Christ". That Xela's Judas has managed to maintain a ritual function on both occasions is likely due to the small-scale nature of the shrine and its relative obscurity.

That Judas has taken on such an extra-biblical dimension in this tradition need not seem surprising taking into account both the ambiguous nature of his story, and how it has been interpreted in other areas of the world. Klassen (1996: 21) records two such examples in popular Christianity, where Judas is pitied and, to a degree, exonerated for his crime. The first is a 16th century hymn, which contains the following verse:

> Ah twas our great sins and serious transgressions
> Nailed Christ, the true son of God to the Cross
> For this, let us not sorely scold poor Judas
> Nor the company of Jews; the guilt is ours!

A second example is taken from an African-American slave song, which includes the following line: "When you get to heaven, rub poor lil' Judas' head." In this case, not only is Judas pitied, but he is considered to hold a place in heaven, despite orthodox interpretations to the contrary. Another tradition holds that Judas, while in hell, is permitted out for an hour each year due to kindness he showed to a leper in Joppa (Leach ed. 1984: 561). More generally, in theological discussion, Judas has embodied something of a paradox, with theologians split as to whether Judas, through his own will, betrayed Jesus, or whether he was simply following a divine plan.

Klassen (1996) provides an excellent overview of the controversy, and—to an extent—an apology for Judas. He outlines the hard line, orthodox interpretations of Judas and his actions, whereby theologians have generally considered him to be damned for his actions. Indeed, according to the prominent nineteenth-century German theologian Carl Daub, Iscariot is "the embodiment of the metaphysical opposition to the good that is, in turn, overcome by God...Judas remains the only one in whom sin reached its highest peak. He provides a view of sin at its most repulsive and abhorrent manifestation. Faithless, loveless, ungrateful himself, he betrayed with a kiss, the sign of faithfulness, love and gratitude" (quoted in Klassen 1996: 5). Daub concludes that Judas is the only human about whom we can be sure eternal damnation has been applied. This conforms with other popular views, epitomized by Dante who, in *The Divine Comedy*, places Judas in the deepest darkest region of hell, eternally chewed in Satan's jaws. Iscariot is much more problematic for other theologians, including the third-century church father Origen, who noted the differences between the Gospels in their treatment of Judas. Others have seen him as an instrument of divine will, an essential player in the salvation of mankind. As Judas' act of 'betrayal' is essential to the subsequent execution and resurrection of Christ, his role is seen by some as necessary and compatible to divine will (Klassen 1996: 6). Others stress Judas' role as a follower and apostle of Jesus Christ, suggesting that he could not have been wholly evil or under Satan's power, as he would have inevitably been found out—if not by Jesus himself, than by the other apostles, all of whom were given the power to cure and exorcise demons. It must be concluded that since Judas was among this select group, even occupying an exalted position as treasurer, that he too must have been given these divine powers. Klassen (1996: 6) quotes Sayers in support of such an interpretation: "One thing is certain: he [Judas] cannot have been the creeping, crawling, patently worthless villain that some simple-minded people would like to make out; that would be to cast too grave a slur upon the brains and character of Jesus."

These latter interpretations are often supplemented with the second noted act of Judas, following his 'betrayal' of Jesus: his remorse and suicide. The fact that, according to Matthew, he returns to the temple the thirty pieces of silver he received for handing Jesus over, before repenting for 'handing over innocent blood', and ultimately committing suicide for his deed, paints a much more human picture of Judas, who can be seen in this light as a deluded scapegoat unaware of the immediate consequences of his actions. The other version of his death is recorded in Acts, whereby, after purchasing a field with the silver, Judas falls to the ground and bursts asunder, supposedly a direct punishment from God for his actions. These two versions, and other descriptions of Judas in the Gospels, provide conflicting evidence as to the nature of this individual, as well as his motivations and the significance of his actions. This ambiguity has formed the basis of theological debate surrounding the character of Judas, with little resolved in a definitive way. As it is, the orthodox, dogmatic interpretation of Judas as the embodiment of evil has reigned despite well-reasoned arguments to the contrary (Klassen 1996: 160-174).

Klassen's contribution to the debate lies in his analysis of the original text of the Gospels, and his suggestion that the word 'betrayal', routinely used in current translations, is in fact a mistranslation. The classical Greek term '*paradidōmi*', traditionally glossed in the Bible as 'betray', in fact was never understood to carry such a meaning. A more appropriate translation is 'to hand over', and does not necessarily carry with it the notion of betrayal. In fact, the term more often signifies 'handing over' as part of a pre-arranged plan. This is significant for Klassen, insofar as it may signify that Jesus was well aware of Judas' role, and considered it necessary. There may even have been a concrete deal sealed between them as to what Judas was to do. Thus, Klassen suggests, it is impossible to 'betray' someone whose orders you are following. Jesus, in fact, seemed well aware of his fate, and the manner in which he was to die, and had accepted it. Judas' act can not been seen in this light as representing anything but a fulfillment of his Master's wishes, and thus by no means a betrayal (Klassen 1996: 41-58, passim).

The problematic aspect of Judas and his role in the Passion of Christ has been the inspiration for many literary and theatrical works, including, most prominently, Andrew Lloyd Weber and Tim Rice's *Jesus Christ Superstar*, as well as popular novels (cf. Caldwell 1977). In each case Judas is presented as a much more complicated figure than orthodox positions suggest, with alternate suggestions offered as to why he behaved as he did. The best literary treatment I have encountered is a masterful short story, *Judas Iscariot*, by the Russian writer Leonid Nikolayevich Andreyev. Andreyev portrays Judas as a conflicted, tormented soul, gifted nonetheless with clear perception and intelligence, struggling with good and evil. For Andreyev, Judas betrays Jesus only because he alone of the disciples recognized his Master's divine nature, and was sure Jesus could not be killed. His action was meant to demonstrate to the world the divinity of Jesus, though when Jesus did indeed die, Judas—convinced that good does not exist in the world—sees no point to continuing his tortured existence, and kills himself. As noted above, in popular religious tradition Judas is indeed seen in a more favourable light than that of orthodox theologians, and such is indeed the case in the tradition of San Simón in Guatemala. In a bit of biblical revisionism, one prayer tract to this saint has it that Judas (i.e. San Simón) in fact gave the money he received for his deed to the needy—thus demonstrating his compassion and good will. Informants concurred in suggesting that we cannot judge Judas, such authority is God's alone. The fact that San Simón (i.e. Judas) has appeared in Guatemala and performs such wonderful miracles proves, according to one informant, that he has paid for his crime and is in fact favoured by God.

Despite the ambiguity in biblical studies regarding the nature of Judas and his acts, such niceties are ignored by the official Church in Guatemala, which condemns as paganistic and heretical the cult of San Simón. In a television special on San Simón, which aired in October 1996 on Guatemalan television (attesting to the fascination the cult holds for Guatemalans in general), the interviewer consulted Monsenior Efraín Hernandez for a summary of the Church's position towards San Simón. According to Hernandez:

> The cult that people have formed to this so-called San Simón, [can be characterized by ceremonies] in which they offer liquor and coloured candles—coloured candles normally are used by those we call witches or curers—and above all, normally to request harm to befall some person. Thus, necessarily, for the simple fact that it has these features, it has to be rejected...That this has arisen, well, the Church has always rejected it as a Christian cult, as a Catholic cult. It's to say that this so-called San Simón isn't an image of one of our saints.

This represents the othodox position on San Simón, in which connections with Judas—though not mentioned specifically—undoubtedly serve as further evidence as to the evil nature of the cult. Other evidence where connections with Iscariot are cited by the Church in their condemnation of the cult is provided by Mendelson (1957: 29), whereby *catequistas* during the 'Maximón scandals' of the early 1950s made this very claim during attempts to ban the image from Holy Week celebrations.

Another take on the tradition is provided by Padre Tomás, who admits to the spiritual power and possible validity of San Simón, though has difficulty reconciling this with associations with evil. He admits that when he first became acquainted with the tradition, he sympathized with orthodox position which regards San Simón as an idol, nothing more, but later became aware of its positive attributes. As he suggests:

> For me, this was my posture when I first became aware of the tradition. Maximón is an idol, it has to be rejected, all the evil and such...Lately I've come to leave it alone. I know that it's an element within Maya culture. It's a force. It has its positive aspects, because at times he has cured people...What I have trouble understanding is how he can harm as well. Its ambivalent, it seems.

His problem is in fully accepting this reality within the inculturation strategy he has been developing. Associations with evil are simply too difficult to reconcile with both traditional Christianity, and the form of Maya spirituality he accepts. He went on to suggest that San Simón may simply represent a deity created by an oppressed people who needed a supernatural being that understood them and existed on the same level as themselves. In order to fully accept the saint, Padre Tomás would have to see the tradition purified, with evil elements removed. He links this tradition with years of Ladino domination, suggesting that for many Maya, San Simón represents a power that otherwise is the domain of their oppressor:

> I can compare in a little way San Simón with relations between the Ladino and the Indigenous. The Ladino, disgracefully, hasn't acted towards us as a brother. There's a rejection of the Indigenous. Included in this is racism, as with the example of what has occurred in the last few days in Xela as regards

> the mayor Quemé [this refers to a racist graffiti campaign waged against Xela's first indigenous mayor, Rigoberto Quemé Chay], this is pure racism. But, the Indigenous is astute, and feels this. So they say, 'Fine, so that this advocate [San Simón] brings me justice, I will give him eggs, chickens...' So they buy him, like a lawyer. It's simply because they have these needs, like a need for a cure. Thus, whether they win their trial or go to jail, [San Simón] is a fair-weather friend...He's the only spiritual being with whom they use 'tu'[the familiar form of 'you']. On the other hand, with the saints, they don't do this, they refer to the saint with a respectful title....So in all this I sense something strange, but yes, there's a value. It could be a fine thing, providing it doesn't fall into fetishism. If it's one more positive force, then fine, move ahead with it. Purify it.

Thus, for Padre Tomás, the crux of the problem is associations with evil which San Simón carries. If the tradition were to be purified, and placed firmly within the realm of Maya spirituality, he could easily accept it. At present, however, San Simón represents a problem insofar as the tradition is one example of something overtly 'Maya' which he has trouble reconciling with inculturation. Padre Tomás maintains a 'culturalist' perspective in this regard, insofar as he views San Simón as an element within Maya culture, though admits to the possibility of the historical (post-Invasion) roots of the tradition. Thus, Padre Tomás makes no use of theological evidence considered above as to the possible 'goodness' of Judas Iscariot, and does not even identify San Simón as Judas. For him the problem lies in the ambivalence of the deity, and his seeming willingness to work for good or evil indiscriminately.

The problem Padre Tomás encounters in his interpretation of San Simón reflects larger problems with his inculturation strategy in general. These difficulties are rooted in the individualized and local nature of the project, and the dilemma of accepting wholesale the legitimacy of another faith. In describing his work, Padre Tomás was quick to note the lack of official Church support. He considers his struggle very much a personal one, for though the Church has given tacit approval to his project, the very structure of Church hierarchy has made it difficult for him to have inculturation taken at all seriously by his superiors. An exception is seen in the example of the Bishop of El Quiché, who is reportedly much more supportive of inculturation. As regards the more general rejection of this program, however, Padre Tomás cites as reasons for this a general attitude, still prevalent, that Maya spirituality is paganistic and antithetical to the Gospel message, as well as a latent fear in the Church of any sort of structural change. He encountered criticism early on during his time in San Andrés Xecul, particularly as regards his imitation of the lifestyle of his parishioners. This, to some, set a poor example for the villagers, as he seemed to be encouraging them remain 'uncivilized'. To these critics, the priest must set an example of 'progress' and 'civilisation', particularly in the lifestyle he leads, so that poor, 'backwards' villagers may emulate him and with luck rise to his level. Further problems were encountered as regards his program of inculturation. In Cantel, where he currently serves as parish priest, attempts to include Maya spirituality in the mass have met with some resistance from *catequistas* and others loyal to a more orthodox interpretation of the faith. As noted above, Cantel is a highly divided community as regards religious belief, and the power held by *Acción Católica* is currently threatened by Padre Tomás, who sums up the situation as follows:

> This is an obstacle I feel. Right here, we've had problems as regards themes treating indigenous issues. One funny thing, you know, is that I feel freer when I talk about these things outside of the church. To talk here, you have to be careful, because not all the people accept you.

While noting that resistance is strongest from the *catequistas*, he doesn't blame them as they are simply the product of earlier programs of the Catholic church, and their perspective is valid, to a point. Watanabe (1992: 198-199) offers a comparable example of the friction between *catequistas* and the parish priest, who lent his support to traditional activities in Santiago Chimaltenango— including ritual drinking—and thus provoked the criticism of the former who considered such behaviour sinful. A more general obstacle to these efforts, however, is with the Church hierarchy itself.

Padre Tomás feels that inculturation is viewed negatively by many orthodox Catholics, as they see it as a threat to what they consider the purity of their faith. They fear that inculturation will only serve to fracture the Church further, resulting in a chaotic jumble of semi-autonomous local churches which bear little relation to each other. This fear, according to Padre Tomás, is misplaced. The fractures already exist. There are many different realities to which the Bible message can be applied, and while that may result in local variants which are somewhat distinct from the dominant form, in practise they simply reveal further the universality of Gospel truth and represent a true source of unity for Christians worldwide. In order to take this step, however, a great degree of tolerance is needed, and acceptance of different traditions. This is where Church authorities have difficulty.

One source of support and encouragement Padre Tomás has found has been in international ecumenical conferences on indigenous spirituality held yearly. At the time of our interview he had just returned from the 1996 conference in Chile, where representatives of indigenous cultures, as well as a few ecclesiastics, offered their views on indigenous spirituality in the Americas, with a general aim of elucidating correspondences between belief systems. That such connections exist is undeniable, and in some cases the similarities are striking. Padre Tomás recounts, for example, how the Mapuches in Chile have a belief system in many ways identical to that of the Maya. The existence of so many forms of worship and belief, and a conviction of their legitimacy, has led Padre Tomás to something of a personal crisis. He is a Catholic priest, and thus a Christian. He believes in the teachings of Christ and the Church, but is torn when considering their claims to exclusive legitimacy. For he also believes in and practises Maya spirituality, and recognizes the legitimacy of traditional belief and worship. His problem, then, consists in how to respect and moreover, accept the authenticity and legitimacy of another faith. While he admits that he used to consider Christianity the only true faith, in his words, "today I don't think that. No, we have to respect these things. God is much larger than all this. God is for all humanity. This is a little something of my problem...I don't see clearly like I used to." The limits in accepting Maya spirituality in its entirety are described to an extent by Padre Tomás' take on San Simón. The problem of evil, and the essential difference between Maya and Christian conceptions of this lies at the heart of this issue, and is treated at length below.

As may be evident from the preceding discussion, associations with Judas need not seem remarkable, nor should it seem strange that this individual is not necessarily considered the prime villain of the New Testament as orthodox positions hold. In the syncretic processes that have led to the development of the tradition of San Simón, it is easily understandable how Judas may have come to be understood as possessing 'good' human traits, or a mixture of good and evil traits, and to an extent forgiven for his supposed betrayal of Christ. The ambiguity of Judas in theological discussion, outlined above, has filtered down in many ways to present an alternate image of this character in popular understanding throughout the world, one more wholly human, susceptible to temptation as well as acts of repentance and goodness. Judas thus provides an excellent template for syncretic reinterpretation, given the ambiguity inherent in his story at all levels. That other identities have been ascribed to San Simón must, however, be recognized. While Judas seems the most likely substrate as regards Christian elements of the cult, equally valid and worthy of consideration are the more purely 'indigenous' elements—stressed by anthropologists of a 'culturalist' bent, as well as some *sacerdotes mayas*, who are currently engaged in the very purification of San Simón anticipated by Padre Tomás. These issues will be considered presently, as well as some of the obstacles which work against the strategy of the *sacerdotes mayas*.

San Simón Reborn: *Mam* and Other Indigenous Identities

When I began my investigations into San Simón, with the direction of my principle informant Albino Santay, Albino was hesitant in including this saint within Maya spirituality as he understood it. San Simón was problematic for him in much the same way that it is problematic for Padre Tomás. Maya spirituality, as understood by the *sacerdotes mayas* discussed above, emphasizes the importance of nature and ancient Maya concepts of divinity. *Sacerdotes mayas* thus reject Christian elements as a polluting influence on their spirituality. San Simón obviously carries strong Christian ties, and thus for Albino—initially at least—the saint represented a tradition that cannot be considered truly 'Maya'. As will be seen, Albino came to view San Simón in a different light as our investigation proceeded.[1] As should be clear by now, San Simón in Guatemala embodies many conflicting traditions, which at the surface may appear random and chaotic, further evidence of the disorder which for some characterizes the 'post-modern' world. Out of this disorder, however, continuities and patterns are established by individuals, which permits a more coherent meaning to be constructed. What follows is an example of how, in one small way, Albino was precisely able to construct such an order out of the ambiguity and contradictions which, in many ways, describe San Simón in Guatemala.

At the outset of our investigation, Albino admitted that while he was familiar with San Simón, he was by no means an expert in this regard. Thus, we decided it would be best to visit as many shrines as we could and see for ourselves what the tradition entailed. We could then discuss what we saw, and see if we might reach a few conclusions. His initial posture, as noted above, was to remain somewhat suspicious of San Simón as regards connections with Maya spirituality. While noting the spiritual power of San Simón, Albino was clear to distinguish this tradition from Maya spirituality in general:

> It's certain, it's certain that San Simón also is a part of nature, because, we might say, as far as his physical structure is concerned, it's part of nature. But he has his own distinct path...Those who try to connect it directly [to Maya spirituality] are somewhat wrong. Rather it's something separate, as we don't know it's origins, how it started, the form it takes, we can't relate it...Because if we were to relate it [to Maya spirituality] we'd encounter a problem, in which we'd ask 'Fine, where do the Maya fit in, in what way to they apply?' So, for me, it's something we have to distance somewhat [from Maya spirituality].

The fact that San Simón carries a Christian denomination was a principle deterrent for Albino in his unwillingness to connect the tradition directly to Maya spirituality. With this in mind, it is understandable that when we encountered more 'indigenous' identities for San Simón as our research progressed, Albino became more willing in his acceptance of the tradition.

The first such identity we encountered was that of *Mam*, introduced above. Upon talking to elders about San Simón in Zunil, this 'new' characterization came forth. This, for Albino, represented the first strong link between Maya spirituality and San Simón, and he began to stress the connection. This identity stresses the deity's primordial position within Maya cosmovison, as the "first man, the first *sacerdote maya* who lived in Zunil...the oldest grandfather of the grandfathers". Upon the death of this ancestor, a statue is thought to have been made in his honour. Admitting to the other identities San Simón carries, most notably that of Judas Iscariot, he stressed that these associations came about later, with the introduction of Christianity[2]. While initially unsure whether this applied to all San Simóns or just Zunil's, later visits to various shrines confirmed, for Albino, *Mam* as the primordial identity of the image. He was particularly suspicious of Maximón in Atitlán, as he believed that such was a post-Invasion creation, representing the conquistador Pedro de Alvarado, and possessing no ancient Maya attributes. Upon visiting Atitlán, however, he was content to consider Maximón in similar terms to Zunil's San Simón, though the question as to which image represents the 'original' remained unanswered.

Indeed, as noted above, *cofrades* at each shrine (with the exception of Xela) were adamant in proclaiming their saint to be the original 'San Simón', all others considered later copies. In Atitlán, the shaman with whom we spoke linked Maximón to the *K'ux Munde*, or heart of the world, suggesting that he is a primordial figure in Maya spirituality, and a powerful *nawal*. His antiquity was stressed, with suggestions that Maximón is at least 1700 years old. His powers in granting requests of all sorts were noted, with the suggestion that he acts as a kind of advocate on behalf of his faithful. The same individual was quick to denominate Maximón as Simon Peter and Saint Jude as well as San Simón. He also identified Maximón as Francisco Soguel, to be considered in greater depth below. The literature on Maximón is Atitlán stresses the connections with *Mam*, a deity which takes on aspects of youth and age and is related more generally to notions regarding rebirth and continuity. Thus, for Mendelson (1957: 89), Maximón's role in Holy Week ceremonies—considered a substitute for the five sacred days at the end of the Maya yearly calendar—may be considered "a telescoped version of the waning and rebirth of the *Mam* at a crucial moment in the ceremonial year". While I was never able to secure such specific characterizations of *Mam* from Albino or other informants, they routinely stressed the antiquity and essential 'Mayanness' of the deity as a powerful primordial figure.

The second 'indigenous' identity of San Simón we encountered is that of Francisco Soguel. This individual was first named as San Simón's true persona during an interview with a *sacerdote maya* from Totonicapán we encountered at the shrine in Xela. This man was adamant in proclaiming that all other associations (Judas, San Simón, etc.) were simply wrong, and that the image was instead a powerful *nawal*, part of a hierarchy of *nawales* whose physical manifestation is observable in the various San Simón shrines throughout the highlands. This *sacerdote* was also clear to distinguish himself and his work from those priests who 'contaminate' Maya spirituality with references to Jesus Christ, God the Father, Holy Mary, and other Christian divinities. He stressed the importance of pursuing a 'pure' Maya spirituality as the only true and efficacious religious calling of the Maya. Albino, never having heard of Francisco Soguel, offered his own interpretation of what the name may signify. He glossed 'Soguel' as *Sak' be*, 'the White Path', one of the four sacred directions.

According to Pedro Ixchop, the president of the Association of Guatemalan Maya Priests (an association with ties to FODIGUA's National Council of Mayan Priests), in a newspaper interview, the 'white path' represents Guatemala's future, and signifies "unity, tolerance of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity" (Prensa Libre 1996: 94). The white path became something of a motif for Albino, who considered this to symbolize the struggle of *sacerdotes mayas* to purify their spirituality and gain legitimacy in the eyes of all Guatemalans.

As mentioned above, a shaman in Santiago Atitlán also identified Maximón as Francisco Soguel, and I encountered such a definition again near the end of my fieldwork, during my interview with the president of FODIGUA and *sacerdote maya*, Macario Zabala Can. Macario went into more detail concerning this individual, suggesting that he was an ancient ancestor of the Maya in Santiago Atitlán, where he performed many miraculous feats at the time of the Spanish Invasion. While the Spanish were busy destroying Maya civilisation, Francisco Soguel appeared and offered advice to Atitecos on how to resist these new oppressors. Recognized as a powerful enemy, the Spanish pursued him, but he managed to elude them, finally disappearing into Lake Atitlán. He is thus considered an early culture hero and prophet of the Maya, whose spirit takes the form of San Simón in Guatemala. Macario likewise linked the name 'Soguel' to 'White Path', demonstrating the widespread popularity of this motif among *sacerdotes mayas*.

It was not until later, with my reading of the literature on Santiago Atitlán, that I again came across references to Francisco Soguel (also spelled Sojuel). Both Mendelson and Carlsen mention this individual in passing, suggesting that he died some 100 years ago, and was a powerful *ajkun*, sculptor and the last great prophet of Atitlán. Mendelson (1957: 49) describes one of the adventures of Soguel as follows:

> Sojuel, a sculptor, renowned for his saintly silence and his devotion to Martín [an esoteric belief system centred around special sacred bundles] and Maximón, is sent to prison by Ladinos, but borrows a shirt from San Juan: the very shirt that gave rise to the separate Martín bundle of *cofradía* San Martín Particular. With this shirt, Sojuel escapes both from execution, by causing rain to block the rifles, and from a bonfire because of the sun-power also inherent in the shirt. He lives on to perform many miracles, including posthumous ones, and after death he becomes a kind of culture hero in Atitlán. There are also suggestions that he might have given its present shape to the Maximón cult though these are inconclusive. At any rate, Maximón is said to have stood in for him in prison to cover up his escape.

Carlsen provides additional information on Soguel, suggesting his true name is Aplas Soguel, stressing his role in strengthening and helping define esoteric beliefs relating to the San Martín complex in particular, and Maximón as well. The San Martín system is a highly esoteric, private *cofradía* which has been maintained by the descendants of Soguel. Mendelson (1957) characterized Atiteco thought as centred around three more or less distinct worldviews, embodied by the San Martín system (the most esoteric and 'indigenous'), the *Jesucristo* system (embodying more Christian elements) and the Maximón system (more syncretic, mediating between the other worldviews). While later admitting that these 'systems' need not be considered so distinct, that similar ideologies underlie all three, they have provided separate focal points for insight into different aspects of religious belief in the town (Tarn and Pretchel 1986: 175). According to Carlsen (1997: personal communication) Aplas Soguel may have played a role in creating the present form Maximón takes, as some accounts have it that the figure had previously existed as a straw and cloth figure that was destroyed after Holy Week. Aplas apparently decided that the image should be made more permanent, and thus helped define the form the current Maximón assumes.

More specifically, regarding Maximón's role as a *nawal*, Carlsen (1998: personal communication) relates this to the legend concerning his origins described briefly in chapter one. Maximón's creators are though to have been 12 powerful *nawales* (including according to some accounts Francisco Soguel). These *nawales* are important rain-making deities who are associated with various mountains, and who (in their physical incarnation) are called *nawal achi*. They each possess a female counterpart and are further associated with the 13 parts of the soul, located at various parts of the body. Maximón was created by these *nawal achi* and their female counterparts as a guardian of sexual morality, each *nawal* contributing something of his and her power to the image. The result was an incredibly powerful and sexually ambivalent deity, who immediately began creating havoc around the world, seeking out and seducing attractive men and women wherever they could be found. In order to tame Maximón, the *nawal achi* planned a great fiesta in Atitlán, in hopes of attracting him. When Maximón arrived, the *nawales* captured him and broke his neck, turning his head right around. Thus, the current image in Atitlán actually possesses two masks, one hidden at the back of the head, the other with eyes closed and thus blind (therefore somewhat less dangerous) forming the face which is presented to the public. Maximón is thus sometimes considered the 13th *nawal achi*.

Carlsen notes as well that Fransisco Soguel cannot be considered Maximón according to traditional Atiteco conception, as these two characters fullfil distinct roles. Neither Carlsen nor Mendelson mention Francisco Soguel as one of Maximón's many personalities, which leads me to believe that such an association is relatively recent. It is noteworthy that the legacy of this individual has spread far from Atitlán, and it seems reasonable that some reinterpretation of his story has occurred, losing some of the structural specificity unique to Atitlán along the way. San Simón as Francisco Soguel was the most specific 'culturalist' identity I was able to record for the image, and it seems to be a rather specialized interpretation. More often, associations with *Mam* are made by those wishing to stress the Maya roots of the tradition. Such was the case in the coverage of San Simón's feast day on October 28th in the weekly Maya newspaper, *El Regional*. In the article, written by Rolando Ixcot and Francisco Rojas, the authors note the convergence between San Simón's feast day and *Wajxaqib' Iq'* in the Maya Calendar, the latter defined as symbolizing "eight spirits, eight forms of being". San Simón is identified as *Laj Mam* in their survey of celebrations across the nation, with great antiquity attributed to the tradition. The fiesta is characterized as one of thanksgiving, expressing gratitude to the deity for miracles performed. No mention of associations with evil is made, as the miracles *Laj Mam* performs are uniformly considered beneficial and essentially good. While the festival is considered 'indigenous' in nature by the authors, they admit to the widespread devotion San Simón receives, tacitly suggesting a recognition among Ladinos of the legitimacy and strength of Maya spirituality: "The thousands of devotees who arrived to the chapels where *Laj Mam* is venerated this October 28, reaffirms the growth that this indigenous festival achieves each year and that recently is supplemented more and more with non-Maya devotees" (Ixcot and Rojas 1996: 8). While evidence suggests San Simón has long been popular among Ladinos, it seems that with this 'culturalist' interpretation, such popularity is being reinterpreted as a recognition of the inherent legitimacy of Maya spirituality by members of the opposing ethnic group. No suggestions are made as to a differing interpretation of San Simón among Ladinos—as with those who stress Spiritualist notions—rather, for all he is considered *Laj Mam*, and thus essentially Maya.

Further information in this regard was gathered during an interesting interview with a *sacerdote ladino*—a non-Maya who nonetheless attempts to pursue Maya spirituality—who was performing 'free-lance' ceremonies at San Simón's shrine in San Andrés Itzapa, and who stressed strong associations with indigenous culture. I was interested in determining what might be differing perceptions of San Simón between Maya and Ladino, and was surprised to find that *cofrades* at virtually every shrine I visited concurred in suggesting that equal numbers of Maya and Ladinos visit, and moreover, that their understanding of the saint is essentially the same. The only variation I encountered in this regard was in San Andrés Itzapa, where this *sacerdote ladino* made pains to establish the Maya roots of San Simón, and even went as far as to suggest that the vast majority of visitors to the shrine were in fact Maya. This statement stood in the face of simple observation, whereby on each occasion I visited that shrine the vast majority of devotees were Ladino. Pellecer (1973) and Sanchiz (1993) corroborate this suggestion. I suspect a reason for this individual's stress on Maya associations with San Simón can be related to his own valuing of Maya spirituality over Christian alternatives. Taussig (1987) records a similar perspective in Colombia, whereby Ladinos have come to view 'the Indian' as an important primordial source of spiritual power, even if their understanding of 'Indian' religion is partial at best.

Worthy of note are suggestions which consider San Simón a *nawal*. *Nawales* have long been a focus in the literature on Mesoamerican religion. Traditionally conceived of in terms of an individual's animal spirit companion or familiar, different associations have been made in terms of local communities, such as Atitlán, where, as noted above, the *ante nawales* are considered rain deities. Freidel et al. (1993: 184) describe *nawales* as follows:

> Scholars generally use the term "nawalism" to describe the notion that an animal or a spirit companion is linked with a human being from birth. For the K'iche' the nawal is the "spirit of the day" on which a child is born. These spirits are also associated with the powerful deities of the four quarters, the great Mundos—"worlds"—the Earth Lords who ascend as nawals into the midnight rafters above shaman mediums to communicate in noises and voices to the frightened audience seated on the floor. For the K'iche' the word also applies directly to the souls of their deceased ancestors, thus blurring the distinction between human souls and animal-spirit companions made by the Zinacantecos.

Tedlock (1986: 79) also considers *nawales* in his examination of the *Popol Vuh*, suggesting "In Quiché [K'iche'], *naual* [*nawal*] refers to the spiritual essence or character of a person, plant, animal, stone or geographical place. When it is used as a metonym for shamanic power...it refers to the ability to make these essences visible or audible by means of ritual." *Nawales*, are often associated with specific geographical locations, such as mountains, hills and caves, a fact which speaks to the localized nature of Maya religious belief. For each town, the surrounding geography forms a microcosm of the world and cosmos in general, with the community invariably conceiving of itself as the 'heart' of the world (see also Carlsen and Prechtel's 1994).

It seems that *nawal* is currently understood in more general terms to refer to concrete representations of the divine in this world. Thus, for Albino, *nawales* are powerful manifestations of Maya spirituality which take on a physical form. He maintains a collection of pre-Colombian Maya artifacts which he considers to be *nawales*: physical manifestations of ancestral spirits, serving as an important and sacred connection between his spirituality and that of the ancient Maya. Wondering how statues, whose origins seem to be post-Invasion, such as those of San Simón, can likewise be considered *nawales*, Albino responded that such is possible because they were made by Maya. Thus, though the images of San Simón we visited may be relatively recent creations, even taking the form of Ladinos in many cases, they are nonetheless *nawales* because they were carefully constructed by Maya who were informed by ancient concepts of divinity and cosmology, making these images latter-day equivalents to the ancient stone artifacts he treasures.

Plate 11: Albino's *Nawales*

While it seems from the above discussion that Maximón seems firmly connected to Maya spirituality, it should be noted that this spirituality is more syncretic (and complex) than the purified version promoted by the *sacerdotes mayas*, insofar as Christian identities (including Judas Iscariot) are easily incorporated into the system and subsequently transformed. The vision of San Simón as purely Maya seems to be a rather recent development, one undoubtedly led by *sacerdotes mayas* pursuing the purification of their spirituality. At this point I turn to an examination of some of the obstacles which inhibit a wholesale acceptance of San Simón as entirely Maya, rooted in differing visions of the deity and his relation to Christianity as understood at the local level. I encountered such differences at each shrine I visited, where *cofrades* and certain shamans uniformly connected San Simón to elements of Christianity in general, seeing no problem in such an association. A common characteristic of virtually all the shrines I visited was the defensive attitude assumed by *cofrades* in regards to charges of malevolence directed towards San Simón. The one exception in this regard was the shrine in Xela, where one of the caretakers freely admitted that San Simón (aka Judas Iscariot) will work for good or evil, going as far as pointing out exactly where ceremonies for evil take place compared to ceremonies for good, in the space in the patio provided for such rites. In all other cases, San Simón's essential goodness was stressed: I recorded no comparable stories to those described above which detail the saint's vices. Charges of evil were deflected to certain 'bad' individuals who are themselves considered responsible for witchcraft, not San Simón. When it was admitted that San Simón will perform evil tasks, the great danger in asking for such things was stressed. I got the impression that *cofrades* considered San Simón to be taken advantage of by certain evil people, who seem willing to ask for anything, thus exploiting the saint's boundless generosity.[3] That San Simón is thought to punish the unfaithful and disrespectful does highlight his vindictive nature, but such acts are invariably viewed as examples of divine justice, inevitably deserved and thus not evil in nature.

As far as I have been able to establish, a main reason for the stress placed on San Simón's essential goodness is the simple fact that he is generally considered evil and routinely condemned, especially by religious authorities, Catholic and Protestant. Sensitive to such charges, *cofrades* seemed eager to paint a different picture of their saint, often stressing connections with Christianity. Such was the case in Zunil, where the *cofrades* and a visiting shaman stressed San Simón's position as an apostle of Christ. This apostle seems to be none other than Judas Iscariot, though a more human Judas than orthodox portrayals suggest. While stressing the essential goodness of San Simón, competition between various shrines has nonetheless led to criticism of certain practices associated with specific traditions, such as that recorded by Sanchiz (1993: 261) whereby the president of San Simón's *comité* in San Andrés Itzapa criticized Zunil's tradition of offering drinks to their image (San Simón in Zunil is equipped with a metal lined mouth, through which liquor is poured, flowing through a tube and gathered in a basin under his seat) suggesting such to be "foolishness, as an image made of wood can't drink". In defense of this tradition, *cofrades* in Zunil turn to the Bible, stressing San Simón's identity as Judas who was the first to place his hand on the table, and, in another bit of biblical revisionism, "take the chalice at the last supper" as suggested in a tract sold by the *cofradía*. Thus, the libations San Simón receives are explained as a commemoration of this biblical event. Zunil's *cofrades* in turn were critical of the multiple denominations of San Andrés Xecul's San Simón, who, according to the president of the *sociedad* in that town, is thought of as possessing four spirits: "Spirit of the Doctor, or surgeon—he performs miracles to cure children and the elderly; Spirit of the Lieutenant Colonel—chief of migrations to the United States; Spirit of the Judge of Requests, the lawyer; and Governor of everything, universally". *Cofrades* in Zunil suggested such titles are absurd, limiting their denomination of San Simón to 'Apostle'.

In light of these local conflicts, and routine connections made with Christianity at the local level, it seems unlikely that each *cofradía* concerned would fully accept the 'purified' version of San Simón—as *Mam* or Francisco Soguel—as promoted by certain *sacerdotes mayas*, at the expense of other 'Christian' identities. As it is, such alternate identities are admitted to, but connections with Christianity are not seen as problematic. The attitude assumed by *cofrades* in each case seems to have been tempered to a great extent by the love-hate relationship the tradition has maintained with Catholicism. *Cofrades*, unlike the new generation of *sacerdotes mayas*, are unwilling to forsake connections with Catholicism, even though they have encountered in most cases great hostility from the Church. Elements of Catholicism have long been a part of local religious life, merging with esoteric beliefs to give rise to traditions like San Simón. Moreover, ties to Christianity lend a legitimacy to the tradition that is desperately sought by *cofrades* who have found themselves forced to the margins of official religious life.

Thus, while *sacerdotes mayas* may encounter no overt resistance to their attempts at purification of the San Simón tradition in Guatemala—*cofrades* inevitably agree to the validity of these 'culturalist' interpretations—their success is bound to be limited. At present, Maya spirituality is unable to offer the kind of legitimacy *cofrades* find in Catholicism. Purity, in Maya spirituality, seems to be limited to the domain of pan-Mayanism, where it can be coupled nicely with the discourse of Maya intellectuals who address broader issues of cultural rights and political and economic reform. The community, as noted by Watanabe (1990), is very much a "problematic social nexus", in which essentialized visions of specific religious traditions are hard to apply. This is not to suggest that the project of *sacerdotes mayas* is therefore doomed, or somehow founded on false premises. Rather, it simply functions best at the national level. In creating a new Maya consciousness, these local contingencies are noted by intellectuals who stress the diversity of Maya cultural expression. Despite this diversity, an essential 'Mayaness' is nonetheless thought to form the core of pan-Maya unity, in many ways a potential unity yet to be realized. That *sacerdotes mayas* stress their own version of San Simón at the expense of others does not mean that this version is somehow 'wrong', or fails to accurately reflect reality. The reality of San Simón, as should be evident by now, is that he is ambiguous, which makes this tradition ripe for such reinterpretation. San Simón remains a very important symbol for *sacerdotes mayas* insofar as the widespread distribution of his cult throughout Guatemala speaks to a potential unity of religious practice and belief which they wish to accentuate. By generalizing San Simón's identity, *sacerdotes mayas* are able to seize upon one concrete manifestation of Maya religion, and raise it beyond the level of community making it into something all Maya may potentially relate to. The vision of San Simón promoted by *sacerdotes mayas* is one fully in line with the rest of their cosmovision, and thus need not be criticized if it fails to address each variant observed. That an obstacle exists in the wholesale adoption of a purified San Simón must, however, be recognized. The final section treats an issue which I feel lies at the base of this problem, namely the differing ideas regarding the fundamental nature of good and evil as understood by new *sacerdotes mayas*, Catholic and Christian authorities, and Maya who practise 'folk Catholicism'.

San Simón and the Problem of Evil

The concept of syncretism is useful though somewhat problematic in characterizing the conflicting interpretation of San Simón in Guatemala. It has been suggested that syncretism tends to occur between traditions, or aspects of traditions, which share some pre-existing correspondence or congruence as regards specific concepts of the divine (cf. Rubinstein 1996). In such cases, symbols may easily assume multiple meanings which speak to both religious orientations. While this may be the case to a certain extent with San Simón, another possibility—outlined above—is that the inherent ambiguity of the nature of Judas Iscariot in Christian tradition predisposed this character for redefinition at the local level, regardless of any pre-existing similarity between Christian and Maya concepts. What seems clear is that limits do exist on both sides as to what may be considered 'Maya' and 'Christian' or Catholic. At this point I will explore the nature of these limits, which seem to be manifested most concretely in differing notions regarding the fundamental nature of good and evil in each tradition. In consideration of these issues, the concept of syncretism as a seamless blending of traditions resulting in a 'new' product breaks down, as clear limits to such a fusion seem evident and are manifested in a deeper continuity on one side than the other.

Beginning with Christianity, the absolute division between good and evil is a fundamental principle. Good and evil are considered in terms of a cosmic struggle between

God and Satan which, while the outcome is certain (God/good will prevail), manifests itself in the world where evil is thought to constantly threaten God's plan and must be consciously rejected at all times. That such a concept did not always define Christian thought is stressed by Elaine Pagels (1995) in her masterful study of the history of Satan and the concept of evil in the early Church. Some Gnostic sources offer a different window on the existential status of evil in the world, and paint a picture of the Christian world whereby the harmonious coexistence of good and evil is stressed as opposed to the conception of such existing as primordial opposites. According to these sources, the god responsible for creation was only one of a series of primordial male/female divinities, whose actions stress balance between opposing forces. Moreover, this creator god is considered a somewhat malevolent and jealous deity, who arrogantly declares himself to be the only manifestation of divinity, for which he is reprimanded by other gods (Pagels 1995: 159-160). The figure of Satan as the embodiment of evil, diametrically opposed to God, is likewise considered a later development. In Judaism, Satan appears as one of God's angels who fulfills an adversarial role in completing divine will. The etymological roots of 'satan' suggest it to be a general Hebrew term, used in stories to refer to "any one of the angels sent by God for the specific purpose of blocking or obstructing human activity" (Pagels 1995: 39). It was the unique position of the emergent orthodox Church that turned this character into God's spiritual opposite, a view challenged by Gnostics. Pagels (1995: 147) goes on to demonstrate that the figure of Satan as the 'other' developed precisely in response to persecution suffered by the early orthodox Church at the hands of Romans, and later to distinguish 'true' believers from the insidious threat posed by Gnostic 'heretics':

> A hundred years after the gospels were written...Christians adapted to the circumstances of pagan persecution the political and religious model they found in those gospels—God's people against Satan's people—and identified themselves as allies of God, acting against Roman magistrates and pagan mobs, whom they see as agents of Satan. At the same time...church leaders troubled by dissidents *within* the Christian movement discerned the presence of Satan infiltrating among the most intimate enemies of all—other Christians, or, as they called them, heretics.

Thus, it appears that the present concept of evil and which describes Christian thought can be traced to specific political contingencies encountered by the early Church in attempts at imposing orthodoxy, and in justifications of their beliefs which opposed, and demonized, their oppressors. With the success of Christianity, this view of evil has remained, though notions regarding the actual nature of Satan have changed through the years. Such is the point made by Fernando Cervantes (1994) in his study of diabolism in colonial Mexico. Cervantes study provides an interesting corollary to the present case, insofar as he examines the manner in which the Christian concept of evil was presented to indigenous peoples, and how it was in turn related to pre-existing religious notions. Related to this is how indigenous peoples themselves were considered by Europeans, which understandably tended to reflect one of two extremes: they were either demonized, considered full and active members in Satan's army; or they were idealized as 'noble savages' existing in an Eden-like state of innocence, recipients of God's grace (Cervantes 1994: 6-7). Eventually, when it came to conversion to Christianity, the former view achieved dominance, with indigenous religiosity deemed heretical. The response of the indigenous people to the demonization of their belief system can be characterized by the coopting of Christian gods into the native pantheon, explaining to a extent the early success of missionaries. Conflict was inevitable, however, as evangelization progressed:

> ...it is likely that the initial enthusiasm of the Indians to accept Christianity had more to do with the Mesoamerican tradition of incorporating alien elements into their religion than with any conviction about the exclusivist claims of the Christian faith. To the Mesoamericans, victory was sufficient evidence of the strength of the victor's god. A people whose glyph for conquest was a burning temple was likely to accept the god of their conquerors not only as a matter of prudence, but also as a welcome recruit to into a supernatural pantheon accustomed to the extemporaneous incorporation of foreign deities. What soon emerged, however, was that the Christian god, unlike all previous alien deities, posed a fundamental challenge to the existing system by his claim to total goodness and absolute sovereignty. More immediately alarming were the bans imposed by the Europeans on native sacrifices, for, if obeyed, they would threaten to destroy the Mesoamerican corporate relationship with the supernatural and to bring about an end to the present cosmos and a return to the original cosmos (Cervantes 1994: 42-43)

This threat of apocalyptic crisis motivated large-scale resistance to bans on indigenous religion, with forbidden ceremonies continuing in a clandestine nature. The need to continue with indigenous religiosity can be understood in terms of a need to maintain the cosmos in general, with disastrous results inevitable if such is ignored. This tense situation produced many syncretic and nativistic incorporations of Christianity. At the base of the difficulties was the differing perception of good and evil prevalent among Mesoamerican peoples. These were not considered in terms of a universal cosmic struggle, but rather as complementary aspects of the divine in all its manifestations. A closer approximation to this sort of understanding is reflected in the terms 'benevolence' and 'malevolence', as opposed to the European notion of good and evil. Absolute evil, and likewise absolute good, were foreign concepts with no corollary in indigenous thought. Mesoamerican deities routinely possessed both attributes, good and evil, and were thus capable of acts of destruction as well as creation. Such existed in a harmonious balance whose maintenance was essential to the preservation of cosmic and social order. As missionaries worked to convince the indigenous populations that their old deities were manifestations of Satan, it is understandable how meaning was lost and the figure of Satan was not understood as something entirely evil—no deity could be entirely evil according to Mesoamerican belief (Cervantes 1994: 46-47; cf. Taussig 1980: 169-181).

The great rise in diabolism in 16th century New Spain can be explained in part by these conflicting notions. Cervantes offers many examples of supposed Satanism, whereby individuals willingly admitted to Church authorities that they engaged in 'devil worship': this was necessary to strike a balance between good and evil. Moreover, given that all Mesoamerican gods were dubbed 'devils' by missionaries, their continued worship—while considered heretical and dangerous by the orthodox colonial Church—was understandably conceived of as essential and not necessarily anti-religious, even if Church officials found this hard to understand, as illustrated in the following example:

> ...when a herdsman [in 1598] was found to have tattooed a devil on his arm next to an image of Jesus, he explained that the purpose of the figures was to remind him of the need to forsake Jesus when he worshipped the devil, for according to the Indian who had instructed him, just as the worship of God implied the abhorrence of the devil, so the worship of the devil implied the abhorrence of God. Similar examples were multiplied in the course of the next two centuries, when it became a virtual rule that whoever was tempted to invoke the devil or, more specifically, to attempt a demonic pact would need to undergo a long search for Indians in remote mountains or caves. In such places they would invariably be asked to forsake God and the saints, take off the rosary and any Christian relic and promise to stop going to Mass, praying to God, looking at the consecrated host or observing any of the teachings of the Church (Cervantes 1994: 49-50).

Thus, 'devil worship' became commonplace and was inevitably linked to indigenous religiosity, whether the latter was fully understood or not. The colonial Church initially took this threat seriously, and began a long campaign of inquisition in an effort to root out diabolism entirely. Many indigenous religious specialists began to assume a 'dual' role in the eyes of the Church, freely calling upon one or the other Christian deities (God or Satan) according to need. It was during this period that Christian saints came to be syncretized into Mesoamerican religion, such encouraged by missionaries as preferable to overt devil worship. While saint worship may have been overtly considered inherently 'good' to the missionaries, the indigenous peoples invariably continued to combine concepts of malevolence and benevolence in their understanding of the saints and their powers. As time wore on, an emerging Christian notion of good versus evil began to take root in some quarters, though this did not go so far as to inhibit diabolism, as the devil was still considered a powerful ally who could be called upon in times of need. Cervantes (1994: 59-73) suggests that something of a correspondence existed between the type of Christianity propagated by the early missionaries and pre-existing Mesoamerican beliefs. Both religions were imbued the world with supernatural powers, Christian notions of magic were not so alien to indigenous beliefs.

These examples from colonial Mexico provide an interesting perspective on the complexities and conflict inevitable in the initial conversion of the indigenous populations to Christianity. That such occurred in a partial and syncretic manner need not seem surprising, taking into account both the nativism of Mesoamerican peoples and the attitudes of missionaries which did not necessarily reflect Christian orthodoxy. There was something of a correspondence between notions of the supernatural and magic in popular and local

Christian thought and prehispanic beliefs. Both saw the world charged with supernatural forces, which had to be dealt with and controlled in order to maintain order. That the early missionaries gave such emphasis, albeit negative emphasis, to the power of the devil inevitably contributed to continued diabolism. The main difference consisted in the missionaries stress on total goodness, which was by and large ignored by indigenous religious specialists who continued to combine freely notions of benevolence and malevolence in their worship. The resulting system of belief which took root at the local level thus assumed a form comparable in some ways to popular Christianity in medieval Europe, and in others reflects prehispanic elements.

In describing local religious tradition, the term 'folk Catholicism' is commonly used. This rubric has been criticized for both implying uniformity of belief between communities and for stressing the 'Catholic' at expense of the 'indigenous' or 'Maya' elements (Carlsen 1997a: 18, 128), I use it here purely for convenience and heuristic value, given the broad focus I assume. A common suggestion in anthropological literature on Mesoamerica is that folk Catholicism embodies a harmonic balance between good and evil, as outlined above. In his classic symbolic study on Zinacanteco religion, Vogt (1976) describes the depth of this dualistic thought, emphasizing its role as a fundamental ordering principle in all aspects of Maya life. Malevolent forces do exist, characterized by Ingham (1986:103-121) in his study of folk Catholicism in Mexico in terms of 'evil people' or witches, the devil, various nature spirits, and *los aires* or evil winds among other possibilities. Each of these forces is thought capable of causing illness, physical and mental injury, and disorder in general. The notion of soul loss as occurring due to a fright caused by a supernatural being, or by the machinations of witches, is widespread (cf. Watanabe 1992: 190-194). The 'folk Catholic' religious systems which have developed in different communities deal just with this threat posed by personal and impersonal malevolent forces which inhabit the earth. The need to maintain order, to correct cosmic imbalances caused by these forces or human negligence, drives Maya ritual and is informed by a conception of the supernatural at odds with orthodox Christianity. Scotchmer (1986) examines the fundamental differences here, suggesting that this dualistic thought and concern for balance and harmony combined with a conception of time as cyclical rather than linear is essentially opposed to orthodox versions of Christianity. When conversion to Protestantism or orthodox Catholicism occurs, there is inevitably a schism which develops between these systems.

It appears that such a schism describes some of the differing interpretations of San Simón considered above. According to Catholic positions, both orthodox and that of Padre Tomás, San Simón must be rejected due to associations with evil. For Padre Tomás this is particularly problematic, as he nonetheless sees something of value in the tradition in that it is considered a part of Maya culture. That San Simón reflects, perhaps more directly than other Maya religious traditions, a different concept of good and evil, puts the cult at odds with even the inculturation strategy of the Catholic Church. The type of spirituality accepted by Padre Tomás is itself a purified form of Maya religion which conforms, on the surface at least, with core Christian beliefs regarding the nature of good and evil. As long as this is accepted, other 'superficial' differences—ancestor worship for example—can be considered 'good' and transposable to a local Catholicism. It is noteworthy that *cofrades* in general were defensive in their characterization of San Simón as essentially good. As discussed above, this is likely due to the hostility the tradition has been subjected to by the Church and others. It must be stressed, however, that while *cofrades* chose to portray San Simón as benevolent, at the same time they admitted to the existence of evil forces and evil people that cause harm and suffering in the world. San Simón is considered effective in countering this evil, and restoring harmony. San Simón may be considered in this light an important mediating influence in the maintenance of spiritual and cosmic balance.

Turning to the anti-syncretic program of the *sacerdotes mayas*, it appears that their purification of San Simón ironically speaks more to 'culturalist' Catholicism (i.e. that of Padre Tomás) than to traditional 'folk Catholicism' or Maya religiosity. In my investigations it became clear that the type of spirituality proposed by *sacerdotes mayas* differed in key ways from the 'traditional' religion practised at the local level. Beyond the rejection of all Christian elements, *sacerdotes mayas* like Albino made pains to characterize their religion as wholly good—talk of evil and malevolent forces somehow fell out of the scope of their spirituality. A reason for this emphasis on the inherent 'goodness' of Maya spirituality is that *sacerdotes mayas* and Maya religion in general have long been equated to witchcraft. Sensitive to these charges, *sacerdotes mayas* have been working to change their image, and that of Maya religion, in the public eye. Thus, any talk of evil or malevolence is avoided in the formal presentation of themselves and their work, with much stress placed on the virtue of Maya spirituality, particularly in terms of respect towards the environment and connections with an ancient, noble and exalted Maya past. Evil seems to be absent in this system, or rather is viewed as an encroachment or pollution, principally by the Ladino, whose behaviour is blamed for current social, economic, ecological and political problems. The *sacerdotes mayas* with whom I spoke still referred to a quest for harmony and balance, and routinely viewed Maya spirituality as the means towards this end, but the specific cause for cosmic and social imbalance was never attributed to spiritual forces or beings within Maya cosmovision, considered instead the fault of Ladino oppression.

It seems that this rejection of evil in the discourse of *sacerdotes mayas* defining themselves and their project is most clearly manifested in their official presentation to Guatemala society in general, as linked to pan-Mayanism. I do not doubt that many of these specialists maintain a more complex and comprehensive view of Maya religion which includes malevolent forces in much the same manner as that seen at the local level. In building a new identity, as Maya, it is understandable that these issues are not stressed. It seems, however, that in their rejection of Christian 'pollutions' to Maya spirituality, these *sacerdotes mayas* conceive of the syncretic processes that permitted the adaptation and survival of prehispanic religion as a negative. Anthropologists routinely cite the adaptiveness of Maya culture and its ability to assimilate foreign elements and beliefs as one of its greatest strengths. In constructing a 'pure' Maya religion, however, the *sacerdotes mayas* view this same process as something of a weakness; an unwitting surrender to the existential legitimacy of Christian elements. That these 'Christian' elements may not be so Christian after all, as suggested for example by Carlsen (1997a: 128) in regards to Atiteco religion, is lost to a degree on these individuals, who, in constructing a Maya orthodoxy, feel the need to reject anything which 'contaminates' the purity of their spirituality.

This places the struggle of the *sacerdotes mayas* at a national level, where Maya religion can compete directly with other orthodoxies. I do not mean to suggest that a purified

Maya spirituality will be rejected at the local level—evidence has shown that *cofrades* are more than willing to include 'purified' definitions of San Simón along with more overtly Christian interpretations. On the contrary, it seems that pan-Maya spirituality, like pan-Mayanism in general, is gaining strength and will continue to do so. While a purified version of Maya spirituality will inevitably be accepted at the local level, I doubt that this will put an end to other 'heterodox' practices (saint worship for example), both existing quite comfortably within the local religious systems. What direction pan-Maya spirituality will assume in the future is hard to determine. Calls for stricter observance of a pure Maya religion are already being made by some priests, such as Rigoberto Itzep who, in an article published in the K'iche' supplement to the Maya weekly paper *El Regional*, decries the loss of spiritual purity among *sacerdotes mayas*, particularly stressing the need to practise sexual abstinence for a specified period of time prior to engaging in specific ceremonies (Zapeta 1996: 14). Whether such calls to spiritual orthodoxy will be observed or not is difficult to say. While this anti-syncretic movement may exert some influence on regularizing and popularizing Maya religion, it seems clear that connections with Christianity—tenuous though they may be in some cases—will continue at the local level.

All this represents a rather recent development in Guatemalan religious life, and is the result of the many processes which have contributed to a growing pan-Maya consciousness in the country. An orthodox, purified Maya spirituality now competes directly for the allegiance of the Maya, who, if evidence from past encounters with 'new' religions can be trusted, will undoubtedly encapsulate these beliefs within their local systems. As with Christianity, Catholic or Protestant, calls for stricter observance of Maya spirituality will undoubtedly continue, though it seems unlikely that such will result in a broad 'reconversion' of the Maya to religious purity. San Simón will continue to exist as an interesting, if problematic, example of how these competing systems are comprehended and converted to local sensibilities. Whether broadly conceived of as San Simón, Judas Iscariot, *Laj Mam* or Francisco Soguel, the tradition will remain—in some respects at the margin, at others the centre—a vital focus for local religious practice with strong inter-community dimensions.

Chapter Four

Conclusion:
Religion, Politics and Identity

> These are the words with which they remembered the Maker, the Modeler, Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth. It was said that these were enough to keep them mindful of what was in shadow and what was dawning. All they did was ask; they had reverent words. They were reverent, they were givers of praise, givers of respect, lifting their faces to the sky when they made requests for their daughters and sons...
>
> Dennis Tedlock (trans.) *Popol Vuh*

In considering popular religion among the Maya, a myriad of competing perspectives and interests problematize the issue considerably. That this is the case in the tradition of San Simón should be obvious by now. As noted at the outset, full attention to the nature of the players or agents in religious conflict is necessary in order to do justice to the complex reality which describes the tradition. In addition, I have avoided imposing any master narrative or totalizing interpretation onto San Simón and his associated traditions; such would fail to accurately describe the ambiguity which characterizes this aspect of Guatemalan cultural reality. Examination of the various players concerned—from the Catholic Church to Maya activists—has demonstrated that these individuals and institutions by no means represent static, predictable entities, but base and modify their action informed by personalized and contingent interpretations of their history and current reality. While I was only able to touch upon some of the differing ideologies and perceptions which motivate each player, such provides a foundation from which the conflict surrounding the cult of San Simón can be understood, if only partially. What follows is a summary of these issues and findings, concluding with some questions and direction for further research.

The problematic nature of the community as one locus for Maya cultural identity and allegiance has punctuated this work throughout. Such considerations were necessary for several reasons. Most obviously, anthropologists have routinely stressed, and continue to stress, the community as the source (and sometimes the limit) of Maya culture. This is often viewed historically, in consideration of both prehispanic and colonial forms of social organization, with scholars making use of such evidence to support claims which lend further emphasis to the importance of community to Maya identity. My criticism of the close corporate community should not be read as a complete rejection of this model, rather I suggest it be modified or qualified to lend legitimacy to forms of Maya identity which extend beyond the town limits, such as pan-Mayanism. The community, with its associated structures, has indeed been perhaps the most important vehicle for the transmission of Maya culture, mobilizing complex and effective mechanisms of resistance to Ladino oppression and assimilation. That a wider kind of identity has likewise been latent is perhaps obscured by a close devotion to the closed corporate community model, but allowing for such an identity does not invalidate the importance of community. The example of the Totonicipán revolt in 1820, I argue, demonstrates just such a form of identity—embryonic as it was. Current pan-Mayanism is certainly a much more effective and encompassing example of this potential, and should not be understood as an *entirely* new development or perhaps aberration of 'true' (i.e. community-centred) Maya identity. Anthropologists' professional suspicion of the essentialist strategy of these Maya activists is certainly understandable, though care must be taken not to undermine the program of these Maya intellectuals by a tighter devotion to models which stress the fractured, localized and autonomous nature of a community-based Maya culture and identity.

By broadening our focus to permit a serious consideration of the legitimacy of pan-Maya identity, anthropologists may make a real contribution to the struggle of the Maya people, without sacrificing academic integrity. More work is needed, particularly as regards ethnohistorical issues (as in the example of the Totonicipán revolt) which may highlight points in Guatemalan history where such potential pan-Maya, or at least inter-community, identity has asserted itself. Jim Handy's (1994) work on the effects of agrarian reform during the Guatemalan revolution of 1944-1954, provides an excellent start in this regard as far as methodology is concerned, though he too devotes perhaps too much attention to the closed corporate community model to permit an understanding of how (and if) these reforms were in anyway instrumental in fostering any inter-community allegiances. I would not suggest that through such historical revisionism scholars could ever manage to credibly construct an alternate image of Maya identity in the past which would reflect the form of pan-Mayanism at present, as this movement is itself, in many ways, unprecedented. Hints and suggestions from the historical record may, however, provide a deeper understanding of this latent identity and lend further credibility to current attempts at cultural and political revitalization among the Maya. Víctor D. Montejo (1997)—a Maya intellectual well acquainted with western academia as he holds a position at the University of California at Davis—attempts just such a project with his construction of a single 'proto-Maya' culture which he feels diversified in the Postclassic period, leading to present diversity, but indicative of a single source for Maya unity.

Anthropologists have expressed concern that pan-Mayanism may fail to accurately represent local Maya reality and thus become meaningless to the majority of Maya men and women at the community level. While this concern is valid, it seems that the current form of pan-Mayanism is very much grassroots-based, with strong participation, if not direction, at the local level. A glance at some the community-level Maya organizations listed in appendix one, as well as the regional and national organizations to which these local groups belong, paints a picture of Maya activism representing virtually every strain and sector of Maya life. Pan-Maya intellectuals themselves emphasize the importance of community, and while they may essentialize what exactly 'community' is, they recognize the salience of local structures and traditions as defining aspects of Maya culture. This became evident during the peace process, when community-level rights, traditions and governance were guaranteed.

Fear that pan-Mayanism may simply be coopted into the state is likewise somewhat misplaced in light of the tremendous variety of individuals and organizations which fall under the rubric 'pan-Maya'. The diversity of the movement is one of its greatest strengths, permitting a great deal of adaptation—at times cooperating with the state and thus ensuring political space, other times rejecting the state and its apparatus in favour of a more autonomous expression of nationalism. This diversity, while occasionally divisive, is not of the sort which would prevent any kind of meaningful, unified action, as was proved with the performance of Maya intellectuals from a variety of organizations, ethnic and popular, in their contribution to the peace process, discussed in chapter two. That pan-Mayanism has not hardened into a dogma—though some strains may show this tendency—reflects the very 'Maya' nature of the movement. Anthropologists have routinely cited tremendous community-level diversity and adaptiveness as a source of strength for Maya culture. This has made it difficult for anthropologists to confidently define Maya identity. As Watanabe (1995: 35) puts it, "Maya is what Maya do, as long as other Maya acknowledge it as such...As ambiguous and contingent—to say nothing of tautological—as it sounds, such an emergent, pragmatically defined Mayanness remains far from arbitrary precisely because it must be recognized and affirmed by others, not simply self-asserted." Pan-Mayanism itself is drawing upon this same strength, which will undoubtedly serve to keep the movement safe from any kind of mass cooptation by the state or popular organization.

While in chapter two the nature and diversity of pan-Mayanism was outlined, the previous chapter introduced how the 'colonizer' likewise exhibits a great deal of internal diversity. From government officials to missionaries, secular and regular, ideologies and the action they inspire diverge remarkably. That diversity is itself a hallmark of colonialism is demonstrated by Thomas (1994: 2-3):

> It is not simply the fundamental division of interest between colonizer and colonized that inevitably differentiates and fractures constructions of colonial projects and relationships. Colonizers have also frequently been divided by strategic interests and differing visions of the civilizing mission...Colonizing projects were, moreover, frequently split between assimilationist and segregationist ways of dealing with indigenous peoples...Their coherence, in other words, was prejudiced both by internal contradictions and the intransigence and resistance of the colonized.

Thus, it is a dangerous simplification to conceive of the colonizer in homogenizing terms. Such bestows a power and effectiveness upon colonial projects which they never enjoyed in reality. That colonialism in Guatemala was an internally divided, partial and contingent enterprise was demonstrated in chapter one. This situation facilitated the survival of prehispanic beliefs and constructions into the present. I also demonstrated how Christianity in the 20th century has become very much a contested field, with 'traditional' localized Catholicism challenged by Protestant and Catholic orthodoxies. The most recent development, inculturation theology, adds a new player into the mix, while the very legitimacy of Christianity is challenged by the anti-syncretic *sacerdotes mayas*. The effect of this general situation, taking as well political and economic considerations into account, has been an opening up of Maya communities to greater interaction with each other and the state in general.

These chapters provide the necessary context for the analysis of the tradition of San Simón in chapter three. Specifically, the perspectives of the *sacerdotes mayas* could only be understood within the context of those individuals' relation to the larger pan-Maya movement, just as the perspectives of Padre Tomás depended upon an understanding of the recent history of the Catholic Church in Guatemala and how inculturation theology has arisen. The differing perspectives on San Simón which characterize these players reflects their differing ideologies and interpretations of Maya reality. For both, San Simón represents an integral part of Maya culture, but both likewise find the tradition somewhat problematic. *Sacerdotes mayas* are troubled by the Christian associations the cult carries, and thus seek to purify it—San Simón becomes *Laj Mam*, a *Nawal*, or *Fransisco Soguel*. This is not to say that these identities are an invention of the *sacerdotes mayas*; what is new is the insistence that such identities represent the only correct interpretation of the figure. Padre Tomás, while recognizing the spiritual power and possible legitimacy of the tradition, has trouble reconciling it with his program of inculturation precisely because of the connotations of evil it carries. This is difficult to reconcile with basic Christian principles which he maintains at the heart of his inculturation strategy. While it will be recalled that the Dominican priest, Fernando Suazo (1995) in his evaluation of Maya spirituality noted the interplay of good and evil, this was nonetheless cast in terms that saw the triumph of good, and the attendant rejection of evil—through living a 'correct' life respecting community norms—as the defining characteristic of local religiosity. San Simón would undoubtedly be problematic for him as well, as a deity who works seemingly indiscriminately for good or evil cannot be valued in the same way as those which stress goodness and a respect for moral behaviour (i.e.

saints and ancestors).

Both perspectives are further problematized when considerations of community difference are brought to the fore. Anthropologists have long noted the insular, community-defined nature of Maya religion. This is manifested most concretely in esoteric notions regarding sacred geography, and each town's cosmological position at the 'heart of the world'. Specific mountains, shrines, caves, trees or other manifestations of nature provide local focal points for Maya religion which are specific to each town. In the case of San Simón, it was noted that different towns routinely considered their image to be the original, the most authentic, all others thought to be mere copies. For *sacerdotes mayas* such specificity of religious belief and practice is problematic insofar as they are constructing a version of Maya spirituality which they see to be applicable for all Maya. Thus, sacred spaces are respected, but not placed on any kind of hierarchy. There is no single 'heart of the world' which is stressed at the expense of others. Likewise, these *sacerdotes mayas* value any and all of the San Simón shines, and are thus not so closely attached to community-defined notions of sacred places and geography. For priests like Padre Tomás, in certain respects attention to community is not such a problem, as the spirituality he is developing is very much a localized one. Difficulties are nonetheless encountered within his own parish, as *catequistas* and members of *Acción Católica* feel disenfranchised by this fall from Catholic orthodoxy.

With luck, community structures—modified as are at present—may continue to adequately deal with these new developments in local religious life. That the programs of both the anti-syncretic *sacerdotes mayas* and priests like Padre Tomás will not be entirely rejected by traditionalists seems likely as both speak to a valuation of the sort of knowledge possessed by these individuals. While *sacerdotes mayas* may wish to see these traditionalists 'purify' their beliefs and thus 'Mayanize' them, it seems unlikely that such will ever occur to any great extent. At present, *sacerdotes mayas* value the knowledge of these 'syncretic' specialists, and emphasize their important role in maintaining whatever is left of Maya religion. That they continue to combine, at the surface at least, aspects of Catholicism is perhaps a necessary evil in the eyes of the *sacerdotes mayas*, one that they will have to learn to accept. This is even more the case at present in areas where traditionalists are valued by local parish priests (such as Padre Tomás) precisely because of the syncretic religious forms they practise. In this particular aspect of pan-Mayanism, it seems that the work of *sacerdotes mayas* will be supported at least tacitly at the community level, providing calls to Maya orthodoxy do not reach extreme levels. Mutual tolerance will have to be practised if *sacerdotes mayas* are to maintain legitimacy in individual towns.

While I have perhaps brought something of the nature of current Maya reality into relief through this study, of equal value are some of the directions for further research this work suggests. Most notably, concrete study into the nature of pan-Mayanism and how it is being accepted, rejected or transformed at the community level, would provide a clearer picture of some of the mechanisms at play here. I would support Watanabe's (1995) suggestion that the Maya themselves conduct such work, though western anthropologists may have a role here as well, providing such research emphasizes the cooperation of both Maya activists and community members. I would have liked to conduct a more systematic study of the nature of pan-Maya spirituality, though such would have entailed a different focus during my fieldwork. I became acquainted with the anti-syncretic *sacerdotes mayas* chiefly through my visits to San Simón shrines, and while the basic nature of their program and ideology was explained to me, particularly in relation to their interpretations of San Simón, more work on the nature of their organizations, concrete plans and goals, and role in public life at the national and local levels would be useful.

Lastly, more work may be done on the cult of San Simón itself. What I have provided here is very much a cursory introduction to some of the variety and complexity of the tradition. The richest data could be gleaned from a series of in-depth, individualized ethnographies from different towns where the tradition is maintained. The literature on Santiago Atitlán is very rich, though little if anything has been written on other towns where San Simón is maintained. Were it possible, such research may shed greater light and new insights into the tradition which are unavailable at present. Important as well is an understanding of the nature and background of people who make pilgrimages to these shrines. I mentioned in chapter one the variety of people who visit San Simón in Zunil on his feast day, coming from a wide range of areas as far off as Mexico. Any connections between this tradition and comparable traditions in Mexico or other parts of Central America would of course be useful. I am intrigued by what seems to be a reasonably strong connection between small-scale capitalists (storeowners, travelling merchants, market vendors) and worship of San Simón. His effectiveness in securing wealth was reported in chapter one. More research is needed into this particular aspect to determine what comparisions, if any, may be made between this cult and commodity fetishism as described by Taussig (1980) for South America.

As it is, this study is a first step to further research into this tradition. San Simón represents a very interesting topic of study particularly from a comparative perspective, as this tradition maintains a distinct inter-community aspect, unlike no other I have encountered. Thus, it is an ideal focus for studies which may wish to stress some of the connections and continuity between Maya culture in different towns, though such similarities should not go unqualified. Maya culture is very much a mixed bag of traditions, beliefs, languages, loyalties and histories, constantly reinterpreted and brought to life and new meaning by individuals themselves. This situation represents a rich area for research, as new insights and developments are sure to be gleaned from the ever-changing Maya reality. To characterize Maya reality in this way as eternally metamorphosing into 'new' forms is not to suggest that cultural continuity is a chimaera or essential impossibility, and thus equate Maya culture with low-level anarchy. Rather, as Marshall Sahlins (1985: 183) suggests, "every actual use of cultural ideas is some reproduction of them, but every such reference is also a difference. We know this anyhow, that things must preserve some identity through their changes, or else the world is a madhouse." This model of continuity through change is not something foreign to the Maya, they are indeed experts at it.

In light of recent developments in the post-civil war era, it seems that the greatest challenge to the Maya, and pan-Mayanism in particular, will be the maintenance of an integral community-level social structure. It is upon this basis that the pan-Maya project rests, and it appears that the community is under a great deal of stress at present. Robert Carlsen (1997b) provides a sobering view of the effects of factionalism and generalized violence, no longer attributable to the army, in Santiago Atitlán. Despite peace and the gradual demobilization of the country beginning in January of 1997, violence remains an palpable presence in the highlands, with petty crime, robbery, kidnappings and murders commonplace. A dramatic rise in lynchings in recent months speaks to a growing frustration in communities with regards to the ineffectual nature of the justice system. Carlsen (1997b) describes how in Atitlán, old tensions have come to the surface, splitting the town into competing factions with some extreme acts of violence committed by one group against the other. A recent victim in this conflict has been practioners of traditional religion, who were targeted in Atitlán as 'bad people' by an unidentified group who promised to rid the town of such individuals, beginning with the murder of a shaman.

It is difficult to say whether or not communities will find a way to extricate themselves from this situation. It is ironic that at a time when Maya unity is being actively encouraged and deepened at the national level, community-level unity seems to be unraveling. The project of the pan-Mayanists may prove in the end an important unifying force for villagers. While such may appear ridiculously idealistic, there is the hope that by instilling pride in a Maya heritage and encouraging the assertion of Maya identity, particularly among the youth who are especially disenfranchised at present, some common ground may be uncovered from which reconciliation may proceed. In the same vein, the work of the *sacerdotes mayas* may prove helpful in recovering a sense of self among the Maya who have otherwise been prone to intense divisiveness in matters of religion. As they persist in bringing their understandings and voices to the national level, the continued survival of their traditions and cultural autonomy is guaranteed in a new way. Continuing to respect the Heart of the Sky and Heart of the Earth, their words will bring them greater legitimacy and strength than they have ever known during five centuries of resistance to cultural marginalization, racism and genocide.

Notes

Chapter One

1. I am thankful to Robert Carlsen for directing me to Hill and Monagham's work. They provide a very useful perspective on the manner in which Maya culture managed to survive into present times and make interesting connections between prehispanic, colonial and current sociocultural forms. Unfortunately, due to deadline constraints, I am unable to do more than reference their work though much of it would fit in nicely with the present study.

2. What follows is an overview of some of the issues surrounding inculturation which may provide a deeper understanding of the work of Padre Tomás and other priests in Guatemala practising this theology. In considering inculturation, missiologists (theologians concerned with the missionization process) deal with many of the same concepts treated by social scientists under the rubric 'syncretism'. Syncretism, in theological circles, carries a great deal of negative baggage, though is currently under re-examination. The way missiologists have defined syncretism in the past differs substantially from current definitions, which tend to favour the term 'inculturation' as a possible substitute for the process described, especially among Roman Catholic scholars. In the past, and in many cases at present, syncretism was (is) considered something entirely negative, representative of a failure to properly communicate the gospel message, resulting in an impure hybrid which is in many ways worse and infinitely more problematic than the original 'untouched' culture. A more widespread recognition of 'postmodern' issues—particularly those concerning imperialism and the role and legitimacy of the 'other' in relations of power—has, however, problematized the concept of syncretism, and engendered debate in missiology. Related missiological concepts include 'contextualization' and 'indigenization', which, together with 'inculturation' and 'syncretism' depending on how they are defined, tend to deal with the same process.

Costa (1988: xii) describes these three terms as "evangelistic-apologetic concepts; inculturation and indigenization are apologetic methods focused on the translation/interpretation of a received text for a given culture, whereas contextualization sees this translation/interpretation as a dialectical process in which text and context are interdependent." He sees the concepts as progressively introducing new concerns into the process of evangelism. At the first level, inculturation deals with the actual exchange (symbolic) between the evangelizer and the target culture, in terms of the faith communicated. Indigenization includes this, and adds a political dimension with the power struggles between foreign missionaries and nationals considered. Contextualization adds a global dimension, considering the above concepts in terms of making conscious the various power struggles in which the Church participates in the world at large (1988: xiii-xiv). Taking one or several of these concepts as a starting point, many missiologists seek to shed light upon the process of evangelization in general. It seems that for many, little if any distinction is made between the three terms, and they are used synonymously (Costa 1988: ix).

Stackhouse (1988) deals exclusively with *contextualization*, adding the concepts of 'contextuality' and 'contextualism' into the mix. He is concerned with how context can be understood and identified prior to actual 'contextualization' of Christianity in specific areas. He discusses how through the history of Christianity, many repeated efforts have been made at contextualizing the faith. This leads him to suggest that "all of the previous efforts...[at contextualizing Christianity]...presume that there is something about the faith itself which is true and just and of universal importance, and that we can, in some measure, know what that is and bring it to new contexts" (1988: 5). Thus, for Stackhouse, the evidence of past successes of Christianity in different contexts points to something about the faith that could be considered 'transcontextual', or of equally valid meaning in a variety of contexts. Thus, in examining the contextuality of the faith, it is necessary to attempt to distinguish context from the truth: "...there is an ecumenical, catholic, orthodox, and context-invariant 'core' of the Christian faith which can and must be distinguished from the contextual packages in which it is inevitably wrapped." (1988: 6). While this evidence points to the existence of such a 'core', Stackhouse's subsequent argument questions whether this core can ever be truly elucidated.

He compares Evangelical approaches which suggest the 'core' is found in the 'pure gospel'—thus implying that conversion will proceed naturally upon translation of the gospels—with Catholic perspectives which seek "to use those modern critical sciences of historiography, sociology, anthropology, and comparative religious studies which accent a hermeneutic suspicion to expose where contextual 'vessels' have been confused with gospel 'treasure'" (1988: 6). Both these are considered inadequate insofar as it is assumed that there can indeed been found an essential 'core' free of cultural and historical packaging. The approach Stackhouse favours amounts to an evaluation of how 'intercontextual' a particular variant is; one must consider contextuality in terms of how understanding of the gospel proceeds in each context. He does not consider it possible to completely decontextualize the faith so as to better transmit it in specific instances, so what remains is an evaluation of how elements from different contexts may inform each other.

A deep, ideological concern with contextuality is what Stackhouse calls 'contextualism', linked to forms of liberation theology which reify as universally significant all which occurs in the context of the 'slave' in the master-slave dialectic. Thus, it is thought that truth is the domain of the oppressed, as they are the only ones truly in touch with reality of life in all its severity. As the martyred Salvadoran archbishop Oscar Romero (quoted in Morkovsky 1993: 527) made clear: "it is that same world of the poor we say provides the key to understand the Christian faith, the performance of the Church and the political dimension of faith and that Church's actions. The poor tell us what our world is like and what the Church can render it." Stackhouse sees problems with this approach insofar as it is a kind of radical relativism, whereby the truth lies within context, moreover only within the context of the oppressed, and it is therefore only the oppressed who have a right to speak of it. Thus, there is no universal truth, nor is there 'intercontextuality' between truths, as they are all context dependent. While Stackhouse (1988: 10) views contextualism as important in breaking down structures of domination, it "cannot construct new visions of truth and justice, for these are seen as matters entirely relative to the race, class, sex, culture or history of a context. Soft contextualism is today the new form of polytheism; hard contextualism is the new fundamentalism of the left."

This brings us to *inculturation*, a concept which seems to be the most widely used of the three—especially among Roman Catholic missiologists and missionaries—and one that is most often linked to the notion of syncretism. Arbuckle (1985: 193-4) quotes Azevedo in defining inculturation as "the dynamic relation between the Christian message and culture or cultures; an insertion of the Christian life into a culture; an ongoing process of reciprocal and critical interaction and assimilation between them." The process is conceived of in terms somewhat related to the anthropological concept of 'enculturation' whereby an individual "becomes inserted in his culture" as Arbuckle (1985: 194) defines it, suggesting that with inculturation, "the Church becomes inserted in a given culture." It is conceived of as a dialogue, whereby a particular culture informs the universal Church of the validity of their relation to the gospel, and the Church in turn, in introducing the gospel, informs the particular culture of a new form of spirituality. This definition seems close to the concept of contextualization, as elaborated above, insofar as it is a mutually transforming dialogue that is sought between the Church and the target culture.

Turning to syncretism, while some missiologists consider this in wholly negative terms, others seek to keep the term in current usage despite its inherent problems. Schreiter (1993: 50) notes the syncretic nature of Christianity, suggesting that in its many variants, the faith has absorbed a great deal from its surrounding context:

> This is so much the case that adherents of some of the twenty thousand forms of Christianity alive on the planet today would likely not feel comfortable in some of their cobelievers' worship of the same God. How would a U.S. Congregationalist feel standing outside an Ethiopian church while the priests celebrated the divine liturgy inside? How do Pentecostalists feel among Quakers? When one takes this kind of a reading diachronically through Christian history, the variations can be seen even wider. Some faithful Christians would aver that many, if not most, of these forms represent a genuine discipleship; others aiming at a similar fidelity would beg to differ. No one can deny the great variety of cultural accretions; *how to judge them, however, divides us.* (emphasis added)

Thus Schreiter points to the heart of the syncretism debate in missiology: how to judge a 'good' syncretism from a 'heretical' one. Given the fact of syncretism in Christianity, Schreiter suggests that abandoning the term would be counterproductive. Likewise, a simple substitution of 'inculturation' for syncretism is considered inadequate, as this obscures the point raised by syncretism: "...the relation between theological development and cultural processes" (1993: 50). He suggests that the term be redefined upon consideration of what draws people to syncretic religions, or indeed to syncretize their beliefs with those of another faith. He calls for research—especially into emergent religious forms around the world—that maintains a comparative and critical perspective, and affords attention to race, gender and class (1993: 52). Thus, Stewart and Shaw's (1994: 11) generalization that "representatives of the Catholic Church would immediately dispute this usage [of syncretism equated to inculturation], however, and reserve 'syncretism' for a narrower (and altogether negative) subset of syntheses where they perceive that the Truth of the Christian message is distorted or lost" must be qualified insofar as Schreiter, a Catholic theologian, seems to possess a comparable view on syncretism.

The anthropologist Andre Droogers (1989), in defining syncretism, suggests that an element of 'contesting' should be included. Syncretism, he argues, would not even be recognized as a process if there were not an orthodox clergy (or anthropologist perhaps).to contest it as a deviation from dogma. This moves beyond purely objective or subjective definitions as Droogers (1989: 20-1) demonstrates:

> The seemingly irreconcilable objective and subjective options are not the only alternatives. Syncretism is in the first place *contested* religious interpretation. Yet such a definition still remains closer to the subjective than to the objective definition. The latter is much broader and included religious mixing which need not be the subject of controversy, and which may even go unnoticed. Such is the case when the result does not interfere with established clerical religion. Syncretism can be defined as religious interpenetration, either taken for granted or subject to debate. This also implies that what is contested by some may be taken for granted by others, who may be opposed by the former, though not necessarily so.

This appears to be the most sophisticated definition of syncretism, and is useful insofar as it includes seemingly contrary elements. It suggests that in studying syncretism, one must ask who it is contested by, and why, in order to determine the potential for change. In discussing interreligious dialogue, Droogers (1989: 21) notes that the syncretists themselves must be included—not just the religious hierarchy—if communion or synthesis is to result. Stewart and Shaw (1994: 5) follow Droogers in considering salient the political dimensions of the process of religious syncretism

3. I consider the interplay of good and evil in greater detail in chapter three. It is noteworthy that Suazo stresses this, though in doing so he deviates from more orthodox interpretations of Christianity which stress an eternal struggle and rejection of evil as opposed to the harmonious blending of good and evil which typifies Maya spirituality.

4. The church is featured prominently on the cover of the INGUAT publication *Guatemala: Magic, Color and Adventure* (n.d.), dominating smaller photographs of more famous tourist attractions, such as Tikal and Lake Atitlán.

5. This statement may be qualified immediately in light of evidence, introduced in chapter one, which suggests strong connections between colonial closed corporate communities and the prehispanic *chinimit*.

6. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> ...la explicación del indio consiste en mostrar cómo la conquista y el régimen colonial transformaron a los nativos prehispánicos en los indios...La desarticulación de la cultura propio de los indios, fueron hechos que obedecieron al desmantalmiento de la organización económicosocial de los pueblos prehispánicos y a las nuevas funciones que pasaron a desempeñar los nativos en la estructura colonial...Las características culturales que van a tipificarlo más tarde, fueron consecuencia de las presiones sufridas por la clase de siervos nativos en la estructura colonial, de las funciones desemeñadas por el siervo en dicha estructura, y también, por supuesto, de las resistencias elaboradas por el siervo apresado en aquella estructura de la que formaba parte.

7. This rather novel interpretation is forwarded by Antonio Ryals, and is largely based on what he sees as a convergence in the appearance of San Simón (his dress typically consisting of an 'industrial era suit') and that of westerners, and the fact that he bears a similar name to Henri de Rouvroy de Saint-Simon, who propounded a unique brand of utopian philosophy, attracting a number of followers. Upon his death in 1825, his followers founded an 'industrial religion' in his honour, which eventually branched out to a number of European nations until it was suppressed by the Church. Ryals, commenting on the bewildering number of contradictory explanations regarding the origins of San Simón, suggests that all are unsatisfactory. He thus throws another possibility into the mix, suggesting that the cult may very well have been founded by a rebellious or disgruntled Catholic priest, perhaps German, sympathetic to Saint-Simon's philosophy. Needless to say, I found no evidence during my fieldwork to support such a claim, and while I consider possible origins of the cult below, it seems unlikely that anything definitive can be ascertained in this regard (Ryals 1996; see also Heilbroner 1986: 116-122).

8. These two popular saints will not be considered at present. Don Diego is actually San Diego, St. James the Lesser, and is maintained by a *cofradía* in San Miguel Dueñas, close to Antigua. I took some time to track down the *cofrade*'s home, as many people in the town simply didn't know where the image was located. It didn't appear that Don Diego received many visitors, though pilgrimages to his image are mentioned by Annis (1987: 87) in reference to individuals in dire straits. Rey San Pascual is a small skeleton, clothed in fine robes and kept in the care of a *sociedad* in Olintepeque, close to Xela. Rey San Pascual, like San Simón in Itzapa, has an entire chapel dedicated in his name, and receives a good number of visitors daily. See Luján (1971) for a description of this tradition.

9. The shrines I visited included the three most famous in Zunil, San Andrés Itzapa, and Santiago Atitlán, plus the more obscure shrines in Xela, San Andrés Xecul, San Jorge la Laguna, and Cantel. A reading of the literature on San Simón, supplemented with information I gathered, suggests shrines exist (or existed) as well in Almolonga, Nahualá, Santa Lucía Utatlán, Concepción, San Lucas Tolimán, Guatemala City, and Cuilco.

10.I include in appendix 2 translations and reproductions of these prayer tracts.

11. San Simón's *cofradía* in Zunil is somewhat of an exception to the general rule that sodalities which maintain the image in towns where the local church is hostile to the cult go under the denomination of *comité* or *sociedad*, insofar as it is indeed considered a *cofradía* and functions in the same manner as other *cofradías*. The *cofrades* of Las Animas maintain a strong connection with other official *cofradías* and even help support their festivities through donations of money and sponsorship of marimba bands during feast days. For example, Las Animas provides a marimba band during Zunil's titular feast on November 25, the day of Santa Katarina, the town's patron saint. As Las Animas is by all accounts a very 'profitable' organization, they have made a point of contributing to Zunil's development, helping for example, fund a potable water system.

12. San Simón or Maximón has become increasing popular among tourists in recent years. A testament to this is the recent availability of high quality T-shirts depicting the saint. These are sold specifically for the tourist market, in high-end shops in Antigua, where shirts bearing the image of Rey San Pascual are likewise available. In one guidebook, San Simón is characterized as something of a 'party god', the "patron saint of smoking, drinking and womanizing". While superficial, such descriptions have proved effective in bringing tourists to the more famous shrines, adding more and more income to the *cofradía* coffers.

13. Regarding the etymology of the term Maximón, it does seem that this is a Tz'utujil word, and it is strange that an Atiteco would identify it as English. Such is perhaps more reasonable to expect in Zunil or other locations where Tz'utujil is not spoken. According to Carlsen (1998: personal communication), Atiteco traditionalists do at least identify 'Maximón' as a Tz'utujil term, carrying meanings similar to those outlined above (Mr. Knotted, etc.).

14. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> espiritismo y otras creencias y practicas mágico-relígiosas procedentes del Viejo Mundo.

Chapter Two

1. Bricker stresses the intra-ethnic conflict evidenced in the Revolt, when she suggests that "although the focus of Indian hostility in Totonicapán was on members of their own ethnic group, the colonial authorities interpreted the dispute over the legality of continuing to collect

the Royal Tributes as a potential revolt against Spaniards" (1981: 177). There is a serious problem in Bricker's assumption here that the Totonicapán Revolt was, in its essence, an intra-ethnic conflict, as she presents little substantial evidence to support this and a great deal of evidence which would support the opposing view. According to evidence presented by each scholar, the opposition against Ladinos was a key aspect of the Revolt. The only evidence Bricker offers that the conflict might have had intra-ethnic dimensions is in the following statement: "[The] Indians identified as their enemy, not the King of Spain and his ministers, but local officials in Totonicapán and Guatemala City, *some of whom were Indians*, who they believed had failed to carry out the laws of Spain in order to enrich themselves" (1981: 83, my emphasis). This important qualification ('some of whom...') is conveniently dropped 94 pages later in Bricker's conclusion (quoted above) that the focus of the Revolt was intra-ethnic. Thus, the statements chronicling the Maya people's hatred of the Ladino, and the latter's presence in the town, the acts of violence directed specifically at Ladino high officials, and (perhaps most importantly) the only major military action of the Revolt which pitted (united) Maya against Ladinos, are all subsumed to what I would consider, a very minor aspect of the revolt. The Maya against whom the residents rebelled were precisely those who—according to general Maya characterization (cf. Watanabe 1992: 24)—can directly connected to Ladinos as regards their moral behaviour—greedy, self-serving and corrupt individuals, exploiting their fellow villagers and ignoring the law in order to 'enrich' themselves. This does not represent, as far as I can determine, an example then of intra-ethnic conflict, which would imply an opposition of K'iche' actors operating within the same moral boundaries.

The reason Bricker is forced to arrive at this erroneous conclusion is connected directly to her strict devotion to the closed corporate community model. While I agree with her criticisms of Contreras' interpretations regarding K'iche' kingship, I cannot extend this to support of this latter concept. From my perspective neither the supposed crowning of the Indian King, nor the expulsion of corrupt Maya from office are the key images to be gleaned from the Revolt. Rather, the repeated evidence of unions forged between K'iche' from different communities against a common oppressor seems the most salient and incontrovertible aspect of the Revolt. Both Bricker and Contreras report on this, but none attach particular significance to it. Indeed, for Contreras, this evidence serves as passive support for his argument that indigenous discontent was general and widespread. The evidence cannot, however, be reconciled with Bricker's ideas regarding the essential disunity of the Maya people, that suggestions of inter-community solidarity are erroneous. As she reports:

> In highland Chiapas, then, ethnocentrism means a great deal more than a simple polarization of Indians versus Ladinos. It means also one lineage versus another lineage, one hamlet versus another hamlet, and one township versus another township. Zinacantecos and Chamulans have rarely, if ever, united in a common cause, not even to repel the Spaniards during the conquest (1981: 178).

While I cannot speak for Zinacanteco and Chamula (except for in the present where unity abounds in the pan-Maya Zapatista guerrilla movement) the evidence from the Totonicapán revolt points to just such a unity, even if the unity achieved was of a rather low-level and fragile. Precisely, K'iche' Maya from the towns and hamlets of San Miguel Totonicapán, San Andrés Xecul, San Francisco el Alto, San Cristobal, Momostenango and Chiquimula were directly united at various phases in the struggle, with the residents from far-off Sacapulas also playing a less direct role. Residents of these supposedly 'closed' communities, united to guard their recognized leader, Atanasio Tzul. Residents from San Cristobal and San Francisco united in direct military conflict with the nation's Ladino army. Residents from Chiquimula effectively convinced members of other communities to refuse tribute payments and thus join them in their struggle.

2. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> 'una apología estética de la vida miserable del indígena' que sirve para engañar a los indígenas, divertir a los gringos, y 'alivar, purificar, y asegurar la conflictiva conciencia del mismo ladino organizador y espectador del homenaje'.

3. I include for reference in Appendix 1 a glossary of the acronyms used in the following overview together with a general list and description of Maya organizations, as well as a chart outlining connections between organizations and their coordinating bodies from 1991 to 1995. In addition, a list of coordinators of Maya organizations with their affiliated groups as of 1995 is provided.

4. See also Hale (1994) for a similar perspective on this event, particularly as regards the divisive influence of leftist and popular groups with concern to ethnic issues.

5. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> teniendo en cuenta que además de los indígenas; los campesinos, obreros, afroamericanos y sectores populares en su conjunto han sufrido la explotación, el genocidio, es por ello que la campaña en su lucha no tiene carácter racial sino clasista.

6. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> 259 delegados, más de 125 invitados y 362 observadores... pertenecientes a 347 organizationes en representación de la casi totalidad de organizaciones indígenas, populares y afroamericanas del Continente... y 49 etnias, naciones o pueblos originarios.

7. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> En concreto, los 'mayas' argumentan que la Campaña Continental no estaba manejada por indígenas: a pesar de que fueron organizaciones indígenas las

que la iniciaron, "quizás por falta de experiencia política ...fueron eliminados del mapa, y esta campaña continental fue asumida por latinos de izquierda" (Cojtí). Y segundo, como consecuncia de ello y en un plano cuantitativo, en Xela "los representantes de organizaciones indias eran marginales" (Cojtí), "por lo menos el 90% eran de organizaciones populares que no reivindican derechos específicos de los pueblos indios, el resultado era que no hacía referencia a nuestros derechos... ante esas perspectivas tenemos que hacer valer las perspectivas del Pueblo Maya" (Chols). Además hubo una diferencia cualitativa, pues según Cojtí "no es igual que tú coloques a un k'iche' semianalfabeto... ante un Héctor Díaz Polanco, es una injusticia, sin embargo allí estaban participando tu a tu." En definitiva, era palpable "la influencia izquierdista y marxista" (Cojtí)...

8. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> Como institución (la postura) es no apoyarla así directamente, sino que como mayas, primero por ser mujer maya sin analizar su tendencia política, porque no es una política auténtica maya... ella maneja activamente, para mí en lo personal, lo integracionista... supeditado a la cultura occidental... Si logra el premio está bien, ¿verdad?, podemos tomarlo como una bandera de rescate o de reivindicación con el Pueblo Maya.

9. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> proliferación de partidos políticas sin ideología y posición definidas...la pérdida de credibilidad de las instituciones gubernamentales.

10. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> homogeneizante, centralista, clasista, militarista, patriarcal, represiva y etnocentrista

11. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> pluricultural y plurilingüe...que satisfaga las necesidades de los pueblos que coexisten en Guatemala

12. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> una de las bases fundamentales del desarollo social integral.

13. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> i) la descendencia directa de los antiguos mayas; ii) idiomas que provienen

> de una raíz maya común; iii) una cosmovisión que se basa en la relación armónica de todos los elementos del universo, en el que el ser humano es sólo un elemento más, la tierra es la madre que da la vida, y el maíz es un signo sagrada, eje de su cultura. Esta cosmovisión se ha transmitido de generación en generación a través de la producción material y escrita y por medio de la tradición oral, en la que la mujer ha jugado un papel determinante. iv) una cultura común basada en los principios y estructuras del pensamiento maya, una filosofía, un legado de conocimientos científicos y tecnológicos, una concepción artística y estética propia, una memoria histórica colectiva propia, una organización comunitaria fundamentada en la solidaridad y el respeto a sus semejantes, y una concepción de la autoridad basada en valores éticos y morales; y v) la auto-identificación.

14. I was recently refered by Robert Carlsen to an article he co-authoured with Martin Prechtel (Carlsen and Prechtel 1994) which provides the most comprehensive examination of Maya shamanism I have encountered. While their work focusses upon Santiago Atitlán, much of the analysis is applicable to shamanism in general. In addition to the *aj'q'ij* and *aj'mes* they identify the *aj'q'umanel* (a herbalist with shamanic elements), *lsay ruki kumats* and *ruki kik 'om* (specialists for snake and spider bites respectively), and the *q'isom*, *aj'tzay* and *aj'itz* (various types of witch).

15. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> Para decir verdad hay dos clases de sacerdotes mayas: primero los que vienen tradicionalmente, los señores que están manteniendo la Tradición. Ellos lo que aprendieron lo transmiten, tal vez no saben de dónde viene, después de 500 años, tal vez no se dan cuenta del sincretismo. Pero lo que es muy importante es que están manteniendo una Tradición. En cuanto a las nuevas generaciones, estamos tratando de ver lo que es original nuestro de lo que no es, estamos separando. Esto no quiere decir que nosotros estemos peleando. Por ejemplo yo, cuando llego a una iglesia, tengo que respetar, debo de hacer lo que tengo que hacer. Tratamos de purificar lo que es original maya para ver claro qué es lo que hay aquí.

16. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> decirle a la gente 'no hagan esto, esto no es nuestro', tiene que nacer de ellos. No se puede coaccionar a la gente, no se le puede estar llevando de aquí para allá, hay que respetar...Nosotros tenemos preparar una pureza para que la gente encuenre gusto por regresar. Es decisión de ellos si lo toman o no. Si no estaríamos cayendo en lo que vinieron a hacernos los castellanos.

17. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> Hasta cierto punto la Iglesia Católica está perdiendo su pureza porque están metiendo cosas de la religión maya para no perder su fuerza o para que la gente no se desaliente.

18. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> En esa nueva identidad maya-cristiana la religión maya es madre es matriz, está la base, está más hondo que lo cristiano. Conozco pastores evangélicos y dirigentes católicos que no pueden practicar públicamente la religión maya, la tienen escondida, pero que cuando tienen problemas con su congregación acuden a nosotros, nos piden ayuda, nos piden ceremonias.

19. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> **§3/c. Espiritualidad**
> 1. Se reconoce la importancia y la especidicidad de la espiritualidad maya como componente esencial de su cosmovisión y de la transmisión de sus valores, así como la de los demás pueblos indígenas.
> 2. El Gobierno se compromete a hacer respetar el ejercicio de esta espiritualidad en todas sus manifestaciones en particular el derecho a practicarla, tanto en público como en privado por medio de la enseñanza, el culto y la observancia. Se reconoce asimismo la importancia del respeto debido a los guías espirituales indígenas así como a las ceremonias y los lugares sagrados.
> 3. El Gobierno promoverá ante el Congreso de la Repúplica una reform al artículo 66 de la Constitución Política de la República a fin de estipular que el Estado reconoce, respeta y protege las distintas formas de espiritualidad practicadas por los pueblos maya, garífuna y xinca.
> **d. Templos, Centros Ceremoniales, y Lugares Sagrados**
> 1. Se reconoce el valor histórico y la poyección actual de los templos y centros ceremoniales como parte de la herencia cultural, histórica y espiritual maya y de los demás pueblos indígenas.
> **Templos y Centros Ceremoniales Situados en Zonas Protegidas por el Estado como Arqueológicas**
> 2. De conformidad con la Constitución Política de la República, forman parte del patrimonio cultural nacional los templos y centros ceremoniales de valor arqueológico. Como tales, sone bienes del Estado y deben ser protegidos. En este contexto, deberá asegurarse que no se vulnere ese precepto en el caso de templos y centros ceremoniales de valor arqueológico que se encuentren o se descubran en propiedad privada.
> 3. Se reconoce el derecho de los pueblos maya, garífuna y xinca de participar en la conservación y administración de estos lugares. Para garantizar este derecho, el Gobierno se compromete a impulsar, con la particpación de los pueblos indígenas, las medidad legales que aseguren una redefinición de las

> entidades del Estado encargadas de esta función que haga efectivo este derecho.
> 4. Se modificará la reglamentación para la protección de los centros ceremoniales en zonas arqueológicas a efecto que dicha reglamentación posibilite la práctica de la espiritualidad y no pueda constituirse en un impedimento para el ejercicio de la misma. El Gobierno promoverá, conjuntamente con las organizaciones espirituales indígenas, un reglamento del acceso a dichos centros ceremoniales que garatice la libre práctica de la espiritualidad indígena dentro de las condiciones de respecto requeridas por los guías espirituales.
> **Lugares Sagrados**
> 5. Se reononce la existencia de otros lugares sagrados donde se ejerce tradicionalmente la espiritualidad indígena, y en particular maya, que deben ser preservados. Para ello, se creará una comisión integrada por representantes del Gobierno y de las organizaciones indígenas, y de guías espirituales indígenas para definir estos lugares así como el régimen de su preservación.

20. This document, entitled *Nuestra Cosmovision Maya*, is archived at CEDIM (*Centro de Documentatión e Investigación Maya*) in Guatemala City, folio 903-D.

21. My translation, Spanish text is as follows:

> Los sacerdotes tradicionales no tiene sus elementos, sus ceremonieas organizadas. Es como si yo pido a alguien una fruta y me da la pepita, no me da en realidad lo que lo pido. Pero ahí están, tienen los valores, los elementos, hay que organizarlos. Que estos sacerdotes tradicionales vayan a organizar el pensamiento, la teología maya, lo dudo. Habrá que esperar, lo mínimo, cincuenta años. Sucede que muchos se ordenan de sacerdotes mayas y siguen cayendo en el sincretismo. Hay una nueva generación de saceredotes mayas que cuidan de purificar la religión. Ellos son una semilla que tiene que fructificar.

22. This document is archived together with that described in note 20. I have not been able to find any further reference to this group or its activities, and it may be that it has been subsumed into one of the other Councils of Maya Priests which have sprung up in recent years. The translation is mine, Spanish text is as follows:

> Con profundo respeto saludamos a nuestros pueblos originarios y sus autoridades políticas y espiritualies para anuniciarles que ha sido restablecido el Gran Consejo de Sabios Cientistas que en tiempos antiguos orientaba la vida de nuestros peublos de acuerdo a las leyes del cielo y de la tierra contenidas en nuestros calendarios ceremoniales. Aquel Consejo que hace más de cinco siglos pasó al silencio por circunstancias inevitables de un

> tiempo oscuro y de crueldad que felizmente ya agoniza. Consejo que ahora renace con el nombre de CONSEJO CONTINENTAL DE ANCIANOS Y SACERDOTES ORIGINARIOS DE AMERICA, para dar cumplimiento a las profecías de nuestros venerables sabios y guías espirituales para estos tiempos, profecías que se confirman con los acontecimientos humanos y naturales que por todas partes sacuden nuestras vidas.

Chapter Three

1.As this admission—that my presence influenced in no small way the data I 'collected'—may leave me open to criticism from certain post-modern anthropological positions, perhaps a few words in defence may be appropriate. While I admit to the partial validity of the post-modern critque of objectivity in ethnographic fieldwork, based in the assumption that subjectivity and the researcher's bias inevitably effects the data collected (or created), I do not see this as culminating in a 'crisis of representation', whereby the ethnographer can say nothing in general about a culture or a place, due to a breakdown in ideas concerning authority—both of the ethnographer and informants (eg. Marcus and Fischer 1986). I fully admit to the fact that through my fieldwork, Albino came to change his mind about San Simón, and was thus clearly influenced by my presence and the ethnographic process in general. This, however, did not lead—for him or others with whom I consulted—to a general surrender of authority. Albino remained confident throughout in discussing what he considered to be Maya culture and spirituality, and a good deal of continuity can be established between his perspective and those of others. I do not pretend to construct a single unified vision of Maya culture, or even San Simón, and I admit to the variation here. However, while from one perspective, the 'post-modern' world may seem an internally fractured, incoherent madhouse, an equally valid viewpoint stresses the continuity and order brought to the world, through culture. As Carlsen (1997a: 8) so ably suggests in a criticism of extreme versions of post-modern thought, "conspicuously absent in such discussions (not to dismiss their usefulness) is the simple fact that while internal disorder and inconsistency certainly exists, so do significant similarity and consistency." The nature of this 'internal disorder and inconsistency' as related to the tradition of San Simón and religion in Guatemala generally should be clear by now. I wish to stress at this point, however, that for the different players involved, order is indeed created and this may be described and interpreted by the anthropologist.

2. With reference to associations with Judas, Mendelson (1957: 85) offers the testimony of one informant who considers this identity to likewise be a later development. After describing the origins of Maximón, discussed above, this informant suggests that an alternate identity as Judas was in fact decided on by the creators of the image: "The *palo* [refers to Maximón's mask] now used is the same one the original sculptors used, or was until the priests took it. And about that time the sculptors decided that the figure should be a representative of Judas and so they have their *fiesta* on *Miércoles Santo*. And that is how the Holy Week celebrations came about." Thus, in this case, associations with Christianity occur

almost as an afterthought to the original 'indigenous' origins of Maximón.

3. This attitude seems reflected in a sign hung on the wall to San Simón's right in his temple in San Andrés Itzapa, which, in a pleading tone, implores visitors not to ask for evil things:

> Dear friends. I Simón give you my thanks because you believe in me. I Simón ask you not to come with a handful of candles to ask evil to be done against your brothers, because [it is] hurtful what you ask for them. If this is what you ask, don't [waste] my time, to arrive dressed as a sheep if underneath you are a wolf.

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Appendices

1. Maya Organizations and Coordinating Bodies

2. Prayer Tracts

Appendix One:
Maya Organizations and Coordinating Bodies

Maya Coordinating Organizations in Guatemala as of 1995
(adapted from Bastos and Camus 1995: 193)

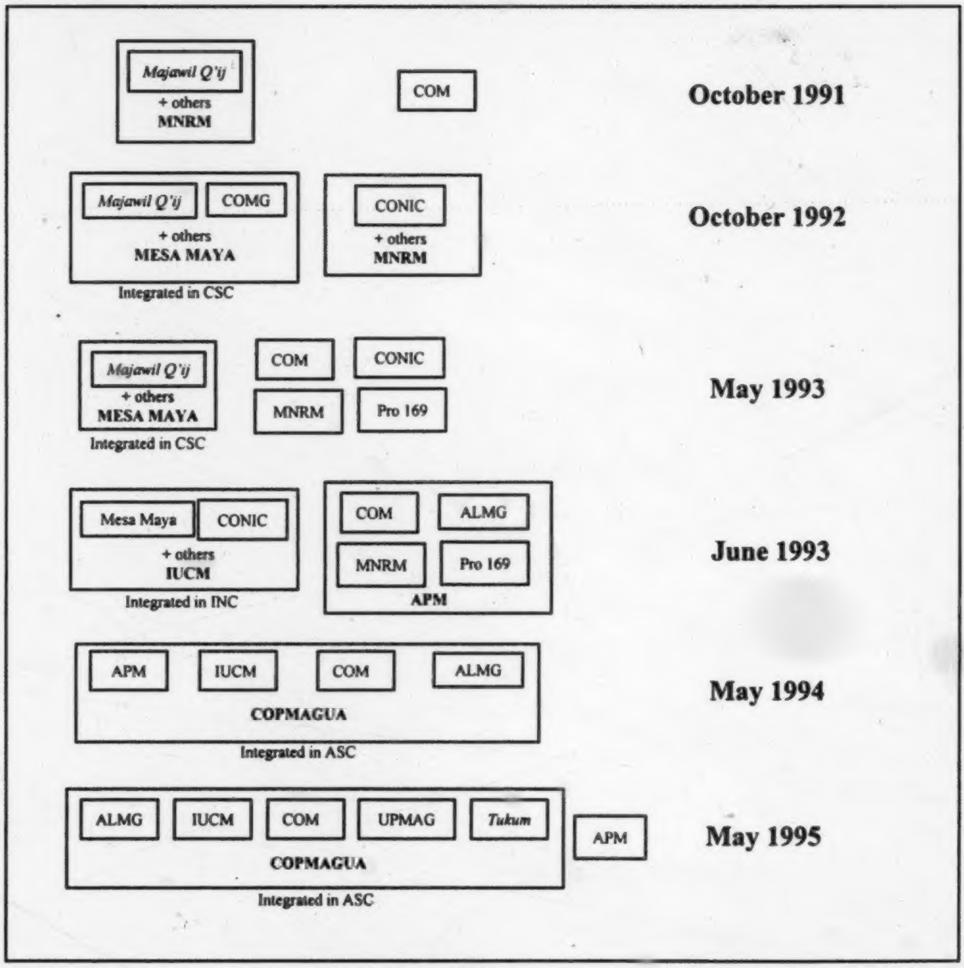
ALMG - *Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala* (Academy of Mayan Languages of Guatemala). This organization has its roots in 1984, and was officially recognized by the Guatemalan state in 1991. While the mandate of this organization speaks more specifically to the preservation and promotion of the 20-22 recognized Maya languages in the country, ALMG has been active more generally in issues of ethnicity and indigenous rights. One of the major achievements of the Academy was the development of a unified Maya alphabet—replacing the haphazard and various systems employed in the past—which was eventually officialized by the government in the early 1990s, despite strong opposition from the Summer Institute of Linguistics/Wycliffe Bible Translators (England 1996: 184). ALMG has broadened its focus in recent years, treating issues of discrimination and cultural rights of the Maya from a linguistic perspective. One of the most prominent members of ALMG, and several other Maya organizations, is Dr. Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil. Cojtí figures prominently in the early history of this type of Maya organization, and was the first Maya intellectual to clearly delineate the nature of ethnic problems in Guatemala.

APM - *Asemblea del Pueblo Maya* (Assembly of the Maya People). The roots of this organization are traced in chapter two, in regards to the *autogolpe* of President Serrano in 1993. The APM has proven effective in providing an 'ethnic' voice to the Maya thus balancing organizations which may be considered more strictly 'popular' in focus. It has sought to guarantee political space within the Guatemalan state for the immediate redress of certain ethnic rights. Its work in cultural revitalization and development of projects in this regard is noted.

COMG - *Consejo de Organizaciones Mayas de Guatemala* (Council of Maya organizations of Guatemala). COMG was founded in 1990, and represents one of the earliest and most successful coordinating bodies of Maya organizations with a more general 'ethnic' focus. COMG has been particularly active in publication and dissemination of the work of Maya intellectual, and has successfully integrated and represented a variety of concerns, from the local to national level.

IUCM - *Instancia de Unidad y Consenso Maya* (Maya Petition for Unity and Consensus). Another organization to arise from the 1993 *autogolpe* of Serrano. This organization unified popular interests among Maya organizations, or popular organizations with a strong Maya membership. Since its founding, a variety of groups representing specific local concerns have joined this organization, broadening its mandate to ethnic as well as popular issues.

***Consejo* Tukum Umam*: Movimiento de los Abuelos* -** (Council of *Tukum Umam*: Movement of the Grandparents). This organization was founded to have a voice in COMAGUA, the organization created to provide unity to Maya organizations during the peace process. It is formed of a number of local organizations, some of them with connections to non-governmental agencies. Its focus has been on peasant organizations, youth, women, human rights and environmental concerns. Its regional base is the western highlands, and it maintains a strong grassroots focus. *Tukum Umam* tempers a strong 'popular' orientation with 'ethnic' concerns and outlook, emphasizing respect towards elders and attempting to delineate its strategies within a Maya cosmovision.


Majawil Q'ij
+ others
MNRM
COM
October 1991
Majawil Q'ij
COMG
+ others
MESA MAYA
Integrated in CSC
CONIC
+ others
MNRM
October 1992
Majawil Q'ij
+ others
MESA MAYA
Integrated in CSC
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MNRM
Pro 169
May 1993
Mesa Maya
CONIC
+ others
IUCM
Integrated in INC
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ALMG
MNRM
Pro 169
APM
June 1993
APM
IUCM
COM
ALMG
COPMAGUA
Integrated in ASC
May 1994
ALMG
IUCM
COM
UPMAG
Tukum
COPMAGUA
Integrated in ASC
APM
May 1995

Figure 2: Coordinating Bodies of Maya Organizations and Affiliations—1991-1995
Adapted from Bastos and Camus (1995: 41)

UPMAG - *Unión del Pueblo Maya de Guatemala* (Union of Maya People of Guatemala). Another organization to arise during the peace process, at times aligning itself with *Majawil Q'ij*, and later with APM. Largely composed of regional peasant organizations, UPMAG became integrated into COPMAGUA in 1995.

COPMAGUA - *Coordinación del Pueblo Maya de Guatemala* (Coordinator of the Maya People of Guatemala). This coordinating body, as noted in chapter two, was founded in 1994 in specific response to the peace process and the role the Maya were to take in such. It is the first example of broad-based unity achieved among the Maya, representing both ethnic and popular concerns. As COPMAGUA was connected so directly to the specific demands of the peace process, its future is unclear now that peace has been signed.

Maya Coordinating Bodies prior to 1995 and Associated Organizations
(Adapted from Bastos and Camus 1995, 1996)

Majawil Q'ij*: El Nuevo Amanecer* - (*Majawil Q'ij*: The New Dawn). This organization came about in 1990 in response to the need for Maya representation on committees coordinating the campaign for 500 Years of Indigenous and Popular Resistance. *Majawil Q'ij* became the coordinating body for a variety of popular organizations which maintained strong Maya membership (CONVIGUA, CUC, CERJ, GAM, CPR, among others).

MNRM - *Movimiento Nacional de Resistencia Maya* (National Movement of Maya Resistance). The umbrella organization responsible for activities and demonstrations during the campaign for 500 Years of Indigenous and Popular Resistance, MNRM continued until the events of 1993, consistently representing popular interests.

Mesa Maya - (Maya Round Table). This group was founded as an early response to the announcement that an accord regarding indigenous identity and rights was on the table during the peace talks. Realizing more representation than that provided by *Majawil Q'ij* would be needed, COMG was included so as to provide a clearer representation of ethnic interests.

CONIC - *Coordinadora de Organizaciones y Naciones Indígenas del Continente* (Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations and Nations of the Continent). Another organization to arise during the preparations for the encounter in Xela of the campaign for 500 years of indigenous and popular resistance, claiming somewhat broader representation than *Majawil Q'ij* as connections with other indigenous peoples throughout the continent were stressed. This group maintained a fairly 'popular' orientation, allied with MNRM initially in 1992.

Pro 169 - *La Delegación Pro Ratificación del Convenio 169* (The Pro Ratification of Treaty 169 [of the International Labour Organization] Delegation). This delegation was an initiative of COMG, in support of this treaty which deals with Indigenous rights and identity.

CSC - *Coordinadora Nacional de Sectores Civiles* (National Coordinator of Civil Sectors). This is a national coordinating body which represents a cross-section of sectors of Guatemalan society, including labour and student representation for example.

INC - *Instancia Nacional de Consenso* (National Petition of Consensus). A broad-based coordinating body representing virtually every sector of Guatemalan society, formed in response to the *autogolpe* of Serrano Elías in 1993.

ASC - *Asamblea de la Sociedad Civil* (Assembly of Civil Society). A broad-based coordinating group formed to help facilitate the peace process, and recognized as an integral part of such by the United Nations. The ASC combined representation from a great many popular, ethnic, financial and religious concerns and was effective in promoting consensus regarding each of the accords signed by the Government and the Guerrilla.

FODIGUA - *Fondo de Desarrollo Indígena de Guatemala* (Indigenous Development Fund of Guatemala). A bipartisan Government/Maya institution, founded with the participation of APM, with an aim towards the revindication and dissemination of indigenous culture and language in Guatemala.

Miscellaneous Organizations (Grassroots and National) and Affiliations
(Adapted from Bastos and Camus 1995: 193-195)

ALMG

-This organization coordinates separate directing committees from the following language groups:

-Achi
-Ch'orti'
-Chuj
-Itza'
-Ixil
-Jakalteka
-Kaqchikel
-K'iche'
-Mam
-Mopan
-Poqomam
-Poqomchi'
-Q'anjob'al
-Q'eqchi'
-Sakapulteka
-Sipakapense
-Tektiteka
-Tz'utujil

APM

-Coordinates the following groups:
    -MNRM
    -Pro 169
    -ADECOGUA (*Asociación para el Desarrollo de las Comunidades de Guatemala*/Association for the Development of Communities of Guatemala)
    -Oxlajuj Tzulta K'aj

COMG

-Coordinates the following groups:

-COINDI (*Cooperación Indigena para el Desarrollo Integral*/Indigenous Cooperation for Integral Development)

-Saqb'e Mayab' Moloj

-FUMEDI (*Fundación Metodista de Desarrollo Integral*/Methodist Foundation for Integral Development)

-Fundación Agropecuaria Uleu/Farming Foundation *Uleu*

-CMMG (*Consejo de Mujeres Mayas de Guatemala*/Council of Maya Women of Guatemala)

-Mayab' Nimajay Cholsamaj (A Maya publishing house)

-CODEFIM (*Coordinadora de Desarrollo y Formación Integral*/Coordinator of Integral Development and Education)

-CEDIM (*Centro de Documentación e Investigación Maya*/Maya Documentation and Research Centre)

-AEMG (*Asociación de Escritores Mayenses de Guatemala*/Association of Mayan Writers of Guatemala)

-CCAM (*Centro Cultural y de Asistencia Maya*/Maya Cultural and Assistance Centre)

-IIDEMAYA (*Instituto de Investigación y Desarrollo Maya*/Maya Research and Development Centre)

-Comisión para la Defensa y Producción de los Derechos del Pueblo Maya Wuqub' Noj/Commission for the Defence and Production of the Rights of the Maya People *Wuqub' Noj*.

IUCM

-Coordinates the following groups:

-ACG (*Asociación de Cristianos de Guatemala*/Association of Christians of Guatemala)

-CONAVIGUA (*Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala*/National Coordinator of Widows of Guatemala)

-CONDEG (*Consejo Nacional de Desplazados de Guatemala*/National Council of Displaced Persons of Guatemala)

-CERJ (*Consejo de Comunidades Étnicas* "Runujel Junam"/Council of Ethnic Communities "*Runujel Junam*")

-CUC (*Comité de Unidad Campesina*/Committee of Peasant Unity)

-Majawil Q'ij

-CPR (*Comunidades de Población en Resistencia*/Communities of the Population in Resistance)

-CCPP (*Comisiones Permanentes de Refugiados-Retornados*/Permanent Commissions of the Refugees and Returned)

-COMADI (*Coordinadora Mam de Desarrollo Integral*/Mam Coordinator of Integral Development)
-CONIC
-*Comunidad de Refugiados Victoria 20 de Enero*/Community of Refugees Victoria 20th of January
-*Defensoría Maya*/Maya Defence Fund.
-*Hemanidad de Presbiterios Mayas*/Maya Presbyterian Brotherhood
-FIN/SI (*Frente Indígena National-Sociedad* Ixim/National Indigenous Front-Society *Ixim*)
-MOVAM (*Movimiento de Ayuda Mútua*/Movement for Mutual Aid)
-*Organización de Mujeres* Mamá Maquín/Organization of Women *Mamá Maquín.*
-*Representantes Indígenas del* GAM (*Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo*)/Indigenous Representatives of GAM (Mutual Aid Group)
-*Grupo* Waq'xaqib' B'atz'/Group *Waq'xaqib' B'atz'* (A group of Maya University students)

-Bastos and Camus note that in addition to these national and regional organizations, IUCM represents a variety of grassroots concerns, including: *Cofradías*; Maya beauty pageant organizations; cultural and linguistic groups; agriculturalists, peasants and cooperatives; Indigenous mayors and auxiliary mayors; *sacerdotes* and *sacerdotisas mayas*; human rights organizations; Catholic and Protestant religious groups; youth; women; health promoters; and pro-improvement committees.

Tukum Umam

-Coordinates the following groups.

-CCK (*Consejo Campesino* Kabawil/Peasant Council *Kabawil*)
-*Asociación de Desarrollo Integral y Salud Comunitaria "Generación de Maíz"*/Integral Development and Communal Health Association "Generation of Maize"
-COICAPEP (*Coordinadora de Comunidades Indígenas y Campesinas para la Paz*/Coordinator of Indigenous Communities and Peasants for Peace)
-*Comisión para la Defensa y Producción de los Derechos del Pueblo Maya* Wuqub' Noj/Commission for the Defence and Production of the Rights of the Maya People *Wuqub' Noj.*
-*Mujer* Cabawil/Women *Cabawil*
-MOJOPAP (*Movimiento de Jóvenes Mayas por la Paz*/Movement of Maya Youth for Peace)
-APDENA (*Asociación para la Promoción, Protección y Desarrollo de la Naturaleza*/Association for the Promotion, Protection and Development of the Environment)
-CODIPMA (*Coordinadora de Desarrollo Integral del Pueblo Maya*/Coordinator of

Integral Development of the Maya People)
-CONCAD (*Fundación Consejo Cristiano de Agencias de Desarrollo*/Foundation of Christian Councils of Development Agencies)
-*Asociación Consejo* Qánjobál Ajbé/Association Council *Qánjobál Ajbé*
-ACODIN (*Asociación Comunitaria Desarrollo Integral*/Communal Association of Integral Development)

UPMAG

-Coordinates the following groups:

-CCDA (*Comité Campesino del Altiplano*/Peasant Committee of the Highlands)
-USC (*Unión Campesina del Sur*/Peasant Union of the South)
-UNICAN (*Unión Indígena Campesina del Norte*/Indigenous Peasant Union of the North)
-UCP (*Unión Campesina del Petén*/Peasant Union of the Petén)
-AGRUMAGUA (*Agrupación Maya de Guatemala*/Association of Maya of Guatemala)
-FESOC (*Federación Sindical Obrero Campesina*/Syndical Federation of Peasant Workers)
-CICSECO (*Comité Integral de Capacitación y Servicio Comunitarios del Occidente*/Integral Committee of Communal Training and Service of the West)
-*Grupo de Mujeres* Junamil Rachuq'a K'aslem/Women's Group *Junamil Rachuq'a K'aslem*
-*Grupo de Mujeres* Mujb'ab'il L'ak'a K'aslem/Women's Group *Mujb'ab'il L'ak'a K'aslem*

Appendix Two:
Prayer Tracts[1]

Tract A. "Hermano: San Simón"
(Brother: San Simón)

Prayer to San Simón

Brother Simón, brother Simón
brother Simón

You, who are the inexhaustible source of marvelous goodness and who knows the sufferings of humanity. To you I come with all my faith and hope to ask for your holy protection

I recognize all my faults and sins committed in the course of my life, and as I have been responsible for so much evil, perhaps I do not deserve your holy favours. But as I know that you are the protector of humans, for this I come to beg your pardon for my sins and at the same time implore you to look with pity upon this humble figure, praying to you with all my soul. Do not ignore my supplications, rather with the invocation of your sacred name I place all my sufferings into your hands with the hope of finding the solution to my problems, material as well as spiritual, in your marvelous power.

I will always be your faithful devotee, because I firmly believe in your great power, which has always manifested itself by way of your holy miracles ever since that glorious 28th of October, day of Saint Jude, on which you made your appearance in the lands of Guatemala, where we, your faithful, praise you with great fervour. For this I am here; you have me worshiping at your feet and repenting all the evil I have done in this world. For this reason I pray to you and hope that in you my sins will be pardoned, in the same manner that you granted such favours to your friend Felipe (that indigenous man who had the great happiness to find you in one of the mountains of Zunil) so too shall you grant me what I ask. Amen.

Note: The image of San Simón must be maintained in a little corner of your bedroom, preferably on the floor, with a glass of water, his little red candle, his little flowers and moreover, however often you can, you should burn incense at 12:00 each day. Also, when possible, give alms to whomever needs such. You have to do all this with complete goodwill and always in the name of this Holy man.

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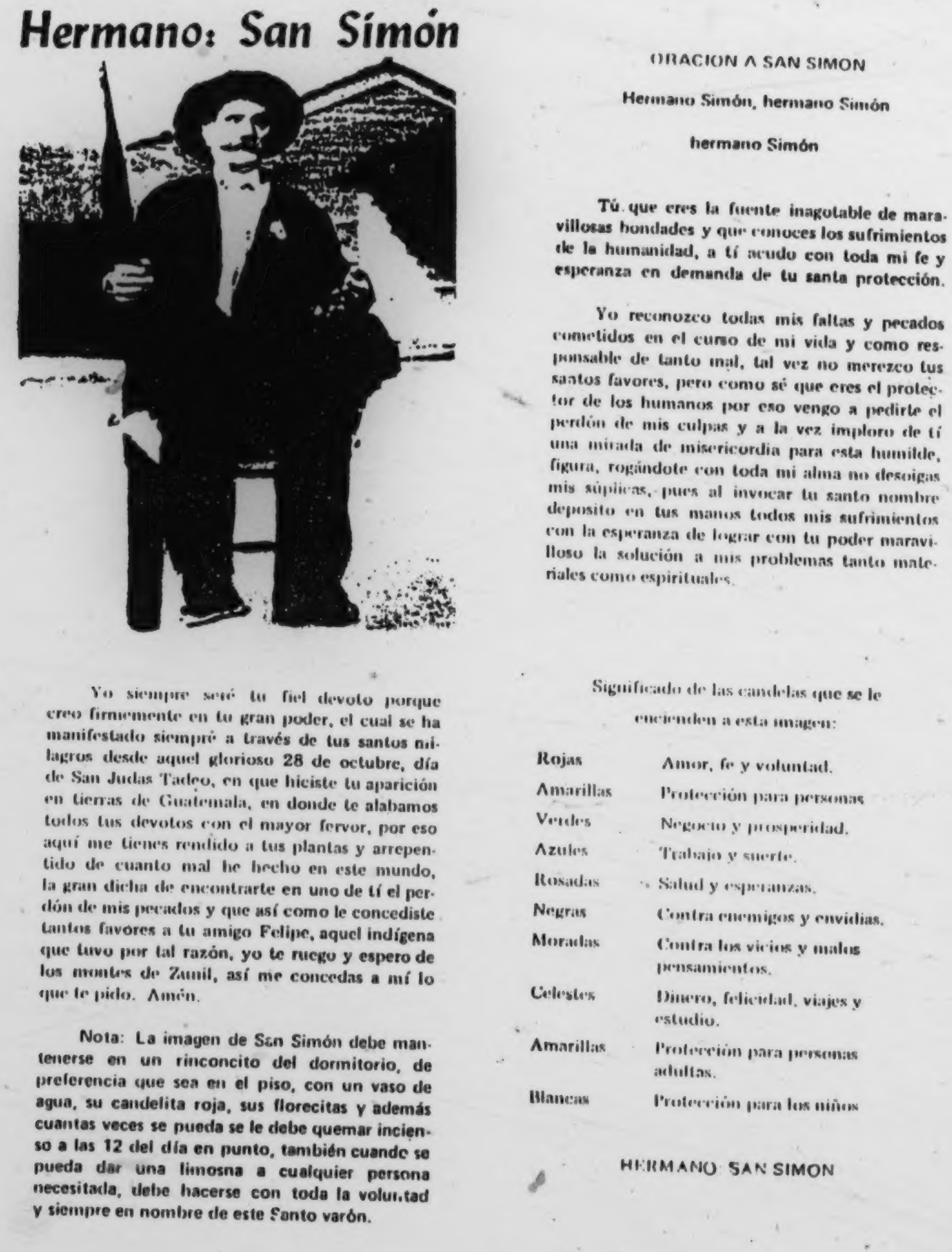
[1] For ease of reading, I have added punctuation and clarified some of the Spanish text where necessary. Some of the tracts are rather poorly written, untranslatable in certain areas. Where possible, I have used my own judgement in such cases in order to convey the general meaning I feel is being communicated. Please refer to copies of the original tracts in my possession following each translation for further details regarding the language used.

Meaning of the candles that are burned to this image: Red=Love, faith and goodwill; Yellow=Protection for adults; Green=Business and prosperity; Blue=Work and luck; Pink=Health and hopes; Black=against enemies and jealousies; Purple=Against vices and evil thoughts; Light Blue=Money, happiness, travel and study; White=Protection for children.

Brother: San Simón

Tract A: Copy of Original



Hermano: San Símón

ORACION A SAN SIMON

Hermano Simón, hermano Simón

hermano Simón

Tú que eres la fuente inagotable de maravillosas bondades y que conoces los sufrimientos de la humanidad, a tí acudo con toda mi fe y esperanza en demanda de tu santa protección.

Yo reconozco todas mis faltas y pecados cometidos en el curso de mi vida y como responsable de tanto mal, tal vez no merezco tus santos favores, pero como sé que eres el protector de los humanos por eso vengo a pedirte el perdón de mis culpas y a la vez imploro de tí una mirada de misericordia para esta humilde, figura, rogándote con toda mi alma no desoigas mis súplicas, pues al invocar tu santo nombre deposito en tus manos todos mis sufrimientos con la esperanza de lograr con tu poder maravilloso la solución a mis problemas tanto materiales como espirituales.

Yo siempre seré tu fiel devoto porque creo firmemente en tu gran poder, el cual se ha manifestado siempré a través de tus santos milagros desde aquel glorioso 28 de octubre, día de San Judas Tadeo, en que hiciste tu aparición en tierras de Guatemala, en donde te alabamos todos tus devotos con el mayor fervor, por eso aquí me tienes rendido a tus plantas y arrepentido de cuanto mal he hecho en este mundo, la gran dicha de encontrarte en uno de tí el perdón de mis pecados y que así como le concediste tantos favores a tu amigo Felipe, aquel indígena que tuvo por tal razón, yo te ruego y espero de los montes de Zunil, así me concedas a mí lo que te pido. Amén.

Nota: La imagen de San Simón debe mantenerse en un rinconcito del dormitorio, de preferencia que sea en el piso, con un vaso de agua, su candelita roja, sus florecitas y además cuantas veces se pueda se le debe quemar incienso a las 12 del día en punto, también cuando se pueda dar una limosna a cualquier persona necesitada, debe hacerse con toda la voluntad y siempre en nombre de este Santo varón.

Significado de las candelas que se le encienden a esta imagen:

Rojas	**Amor, fe y voluntad.**
Amarillas	**Protección para personas**
Verdes	**Negocio y prosperidad.**
Azules	**Trabajo y suerte.**
Rosadas	**Salud y esperanzas.**
Negras	**Contra enemigos y envidias.**
Moradas	**Contra los vicios y malos pensamientos.**
Celestes	**Dinero, felicidad, viajes y estudio.**
Amarillas	**Protección para personas adultas.**
Blancas	**Protección para los niños**

HERMANO SAN SIMON

Tract B "Hermano San Simón: Los 8 Días de San Simón"
(Brother San Simón: The 8 Days of San Simón)

The Saint of Zunil
Department of Quetzaltenango

"The Mystery of San Simón"

In whatever *cofradía* of the indigenous peoples of Guatemala where Maximón is "adored", the question that curious people formulate could be the same: "Do you believe in the miracles of San Simón?" And the majority, in a reverent manner, would answer positively. Now, beyond the "miracles" that are attributed to the "Indigenous Saint", there's another question: "Who is Maximón really?", "How did it come to pass that the indigenous people began to place faith in this individual?" The response is lost in the hundred years of adoration that this image boasts among the indigenous class of our country, and in the impenetrable world of the independent *cofrades* who maintain the image. Various aspects have been considered which might provide an orientation as to the question of its origin; the first possibility define it as a product of a 100% commercial mentality, that it was "invented" to satisfy the urgent needs of a forgotten and marginzalized ethnic group. The other version, which speaks more closely to the reality of the situation, has us understand that the "Indigenous Saint" represents nothing less than the absolute rejection of the religiosity which has been imposed on the indigenous people through the course of their years of slavery. This imposition was initiated by the Spaniards and has continued through their heirs, the Ladinos. This, we could say, is a form of sublime spiritual protest, represented by a "saint" that they invented, perhaps reflecting one of their many gods that their ancestral polytheism had them maintain.

According to the faith of our people—an indigenous "Saint", not canonized, a deity lacking the necessary physical attributes, has made its way into the heart of the people, without any certainty as to how or why. Our wisest scientists stress that there is absolutely nothing on the face of the earth that does not have its reason to exist. Everything, absolutely, has an origin and objective to fulfill.

First Day
The Mystery of the Candles

It was not easy to gather this information which comes from the memory of our indigenous people, and which serves those who are initiated into the ritual practices of Maximón.

While Candles and their Meaning

In every indigenous community where they believe in Maximón and there are children, there does not exist a single native mother who does not have in her chest a little white candle, often two or three. The white candle is not simply to provide light, it is the offering of perpetual flame made to the "saint", which symbolizes, by its colour, the purity and innocence of the child which, with its immaculate hands, when it is ill, requests a cure for its ailment from the "saint" of its parents. And when the child is fine and healthy, playful and mischievous, helping his or her parents cut coffee or maize, thanks is given for this "protection".

In the previous chapter, we saw how an indigenous mother preferring a ritual which was almost witchcraft, moved a white candle from the hands of a doctor to her child in order to cure the latter, invoking Maximón.

Protection for Children

Brother Simón... Brother Simón...
You who suffered so much, do not allow that this
poor servant of yours feels the same pain
at the loss of a child
Do you not see, beloved brother, the failure I will become
in the fields? I wish to dream of you, brother Simón, to
know if the white candle with its smoke and flame
has arrived where you are...
I promise you, brother Simón, that your tortilla, your
cigar and glass of water with liquor will never be lacking
while I live. Amen.

As you can see, it is well known that the request for a "miracle" and at the same time the request that Maximón would appear in a dream of the devotee is common, this is so the mother making the request will be sure that her child will get better.

Second Day
Against Enemies and Jealousy
Maximón and Black Candles

If someone is jealous of your business, or perhaps you feel entrapped by powerful occult forces, the black candle before Maximón can come to neutralize the maleficent. An indigenous friend from Quetzaltenango told me about the fight between witches from distinct communities regarding a certain individual. One had "worked" against him and the other "protected" him from the evil-doer The worst case scenario, this informant stated, is when witches remain enemies, after clearing up the "case", after testing their "forces" in this impenetrable field of occult sciences. When the witch has measured up his "knowledge" and the problem is becoming acute, he comes to Maximón, bringing his black candles with him, which must be burned at 12:00 on the nose each day.

Prayer to Maximón

Today, recognizing my faults, I come to you brother Simón. Today, that I know that the harm that in times past I could have caused my neigbours, my brothers, I understand this and believe that it is not too late to ask you pardon.

Might it be because of this that today I suffer from "bad deeds". Brother Simón, you who are stronger than any witch living in the mountains, hamlets and houses, please free me, I say this to you as a man who always thinks of you, invoking your name and respecting your presence. Amen.

Third Day
Yellow Candles

It is moving to see men, regardless of race, and who have felt marginalized from work due to age, cry their requests before this indigenous deity, imploring his "protection".

In our times it is easy to see men who reach middle age with their yellow candle in their bag, especially in indigenous communities. This candles will be the bridge between those who ask and those who give. The yellow candle represents "protection" for adults.

Prayer

Oh...beloved San Simón
You, who are the inexhaustible source of
marvelous goodness and who knows
the sufferings of humanity. To
you I come with all my faith, so that
you give me your holy protection. Amen

Fourth Day
San Simón and Red Candles

The red candle is that which the young man and indigenous woman of marrying age offer to the Maximón of their community, such that with the woman a sincere love is requested, one which lays the base for goodwill and faith in their lives. They ask with the red candle that infidelity never enters their lives, that their faith in Maximón will be unquenchable, and that their will become iron so as to resist the blows of fate in their lives.

Little Brother Simón...
Little Brother Simón...

To you I come today...To you who has always been alone and suffered for this. For the solitude that you've suffered, for this I come to you, because you understand my suffering in the silent nights, for the person that I desire.

To you I come today, little brother Simón, invoking your spirit, that this person will be for me and for no one else. I promise to always offer your red candle, your liquor, your cigar and your tortilla.

Little brother Simón, I pray to arrive where you may be found.

Fifth day
Blue Candle

—The little blue candle for little brother Simón brings work and luck. For this, you have to bring devotion, find a place like the one we're standing in now and see how a little bit of the sky resembles your candle, to ask your greatest desire.

—And what is your greatest desire?

—To dream of little brother Simón...because to dream of him I know that everything will go well and that I didn't buy my blue candle as a whim, that he will give me that which I asked with her...

—What did you ask with her, bringing your blue candle?

—Ah...I asked for the best that a poor person can hope for: work and luck...If I have these, what more could I ask for?

—What is the prayer for the blue candle?

—Brother San Simón...You who sees everything, you are a just person because you give to those who behave well, today I come to your spirit so that there, in the coast, I don't catch malaria nor chills, nor colds.

Little brother Simón, watch over my house and my parents. I leave you here my blue candle, liquor, tortilla and cigar so that you will do me this favour. Amen.

Sixth Day
Green Candles

The colours of the candles have a special meaning in relation to the request that is formulated. For example, the best-selling candles are green; these—a candle maker told me—are in the greatest demand because they're the ones that are burned before San Simón in order to request the prosperity of businesses. Effectively, if you see that a person who arrives at whatever site where Maximón is venerated brings along green candles, it is an unequivocal sign that this person is a small or large scale businessperson, depending on the dress worn and the mode of transport favoured. If the person bringing green candles is well-built and arrives in a brand-new car, he or she is undoubtedly the boss of a prosperous company; if, on the other hand, the person arrives in a third-class bus, he or she possesses a small-scale business. In consequence, the green candles, offered to Maximón in whatever region, bring the petition, the request to the "indigenous saint" that business does not fail, that it is always "protected" by his supernatural power. Among the devotee to San Simón who have a business, there is always a small photograph of the deity in a corner of their room, with his tortilla, his cigar, his liquor offered, along with the ubiquitous green candle.

Seventh Day
Purple Candles
"The Candles which Remove Vices"

The meaning of the purple candle is very simple; for example, when you see a man with a purple candle in his hand, its a sign that he wants to quit drinking or some such vice...

It is truly moving to see how these men arrive to cry to Maximón with their purple candle, that "the thirst for liquor will leave them". It is the "lilac" coloured candle that is burned before Maximón, with the traditional ritual tortilla, the cigar and glass of water mixed with liquor, so that the prayer is effective and the "miracle" is produced.

Of all the rituals, this one and the one of the children are the most moving. I have had truly surprising facts explained to me as regards these rituals. Men, after having drank for many years, are completely recuperated, strengthened by their faith, the force of their will and the belief in Maximón.

Prayer to San Simón

Oh powerful San Simón, I, such a humble creature, rejected by everyone, come to prostrate myself before you so that your spirit helps me in all my acts and in all danger as needed.

If it is in love, you will hold the name that I desire; if it is in business, that it will never fail because your spirit will never leave it so that witches have more power than you; if it is an enemy, it is you who will defeat him; if they are hidden enemies, you will make it that they leave in your name.

Oh powerful San Simón, I offer your cigar, your tortillas, your little glass of liquor and candles if you will remove me from whatever danger I may encounter. If I am called upon to repay my debts, and at that time am unable to pay, I ask that the judge decides in my favour, for your name and all that remains forgotten. And I ask in the name of he whom you sold for thirty pieces of silver which were then given to the most needy.

I ask you, thus, that the miracles I request will come about.

Eighth Day
Pink Candles—Health and Hope

Here are united, as a single request, distinct prayers in dialect [Maya languages] and Castillian, pronounced many times with tears in the eyes of Ladinos and indigenous people.

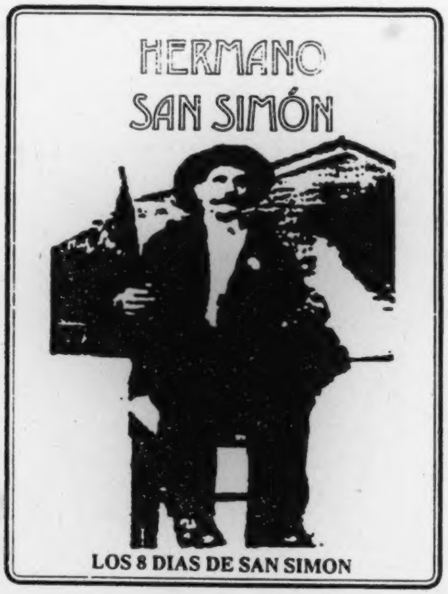
Before the indigenous deity, come those rejected by doctors, paralytics, cancer victims, and failed businesspeople. Here they are, from the most incompetent owner of a modern store to the simplest street vendor from the Bus Terminal in Zone 4, who have made a direct trip with the urge to ask the "protection" offered by Maximón of Zunil. And all return with uplifted spirits, with a pure faith that the "protection" has been granted and the prayer heard. Thus returns our indigenous person, full of hope and projects for the future, pronouncing from the tips of their lips:

—Thank you brother Simón, thank you for all you have given me. I promise you, while I am alive, that I will give you your liquor, your cigars and tortillas, so that your protection never fails me.

Meaning of the Candles that are burned to this Image

Red=Love, faith and goodwill; Yellow=Protection for adults; Green=Business and prosperity; Blue=Work and luck; Pink=Health and hopes; Black=against enemies and jealousies; Purple=Against vices and evil thoughts; Light Blue=Money, happiness, travel and study; White=Protection for children.

Tract B: Copy of Original


HERMANO
SAN SIMÓN
LOS 8 DIAS DE SAN SIMON

EL SANTO DE ZUMIL, DEPARTAMENTO DE QUEZALTENANGO

"EL MISTERIO DE SAN SIMON"

En cualquier cofradia de los pueblos indigenas de Guatemala donde se "adora" al Maximón, la pregunta que formulan los curiosos puede ser la misma: "¿Cree usted en los milagros de San Simón?". Y la mayoría, en forma reverente, contesta que sí. Ahora bien, fuera de los "milagros" que el "Santo Indígena" se le atribuyen, hay una interrogante: "¿Quién es realmente Maximón?", "¿Cómo llegó a unificar la fe de los indígenas este personaje?" La respuesta se pierde en los cien años de adoración que tiene esta imagen entre la clase indígena de nuestro país y en el impenetrable mundo de los cofrades autóctonos que tiene su custodia. Se han juzgado diversos aspectos que pueden dar una orientación sobre el motivo de su origen; los primeros le señalan como producto de una mentalidad cien por ciento comercial, que lo "inventó" para satisfacer las necesidades urgentes de un grupo étnico marginado, olvidado. La otra versión, que se apega más a la realidad, da a entender que el "Santo Indígena" representa, n: más ni menos, el rechazo absoluto de lo impuesto religiosamente al indígena a través de su esclavitud de años. Imposición iniciada por los hispanos y continuada por los herederos de éstos, los ladinos. Es, diríamos, el formato de una protesta sublime, espiritual, representada por un "santo" que ellos inventaron, quizás reflejado en uno de sus tantos dioses que su politeismo ancestral les exige mantener.

Según la fe de nuestra gente -un "santo" indígena sin canonización, una deidad que sin tener los atributos físicos necesarios, ha llegado hasta el corazón del pueblo, sin saberse a ciencia cierta cómo ni porqué. Los entendidos en ciencias profundas manifiestan que no hay absolutamente nada sobre el planeta que no tenga su motivo de estar. Todo, absolutamente, tiene un origen y una meta que cumplir.

DIA PRIMERO
EL MISTERIO DE LAS CANDELAS

No fue fácil conseguir estos documentos que permanecen en la memoria de nuestros indígenas y que sirven para quienes se inician en las prácticas rituales del Maximón.

LAS CANDELAS BLANCAS Y SU SIGNIFICADO

En toda comunidad indígena donde se cree en el Maximón y hay niños, no hay madre nativa que no tenga en su cofre la candelita blanca, cuando menos una y en otras ocasiones dos y hasta tres. La candela blanca no es precisamente para alumbrarse, es la ofrenda hecha fuego perenne para el "santo" que simboliza, por su color, la pureza y la onocencia del niño que con sus manos inmaculadas, cuando está enfermo, pide sanar su dolencia al "santo" de sus padres. Y cuando está bueno y sano, juguetón y travieso, ayudando a sus padres en el corte de café o el maíz, le da gracias por la "protección".

En capítulo anterior, vimos como una madre indígena anteponiendo un rito casi brujístico, "rescató" de las manos de un médico a su hijo, para "curarlo" invocando al Maximón, con una candela blanca.

PROTECCION PARA LOS NIÑOS

Hermano Simón... Hermano Simón...
Vos que sufriste tanto, no permitás que esta
pobre sierva tuya, sienta los mismos dolores
al faltarle su niño.
¿No ves querido hermano la falta que me hará
en la milpa? Quiero soñarte, hermano Simón, para
saber si la candela blanca con su humo y fuego
llegó hasta donde estás...
Te prometo a vos, hermano Simón, que tu tortilla, tu
puro y vaso de agua con guaro no te han de faltar
mientras viva. Amén.

Como se observa, es notoria la petición del "milagro" y a la vez la petición para que el Maximón aparezca en el sueño de la peticionaria, ya que de esa forma la madre solicitante estará segura de que su hijo sanará.

DIA SEGUNDO

CONTRA ENEMIGOS Y ENVIDIAS EL MAXIMON Y LAS CANDELAS NEGRAS

Envidia por negocios, o bien se siente acechada por fuerzas ocultas poderosas, la candela negra ante el Maximón puede llegar a neutralizar el maleficio. Un amigo indígena originario de Quezaltenango me narraba la lucha entre los brujos de las distintas comunidades que defendían a determinado miembro, es decir uno lo había "trabajado" y el otro lo "defendía" del maleficio. Lo peor del caso, me indicaba el informante, es que los brujos quedaban de enemigos, después de dilucidar el el "pleito", después de medir sus "fuerzas" en ese campo impenetrable de las ciencias ocultas. Cuando el brujo ha tallado en sus "conocimientos" y el problema se agudiza, se acude al Maximón, llevándole sus candelas negras, las que tienen que ser encendidas a las doce en puto del día.

ORACION AL MAXIMON

"Hoy que reconozco mi falta vengo hasta vos hermano Simón. Hoy que se el daño que en ocasiones pasadas pude haber causado a mis semejantes, a mis hermanos, lo comprendo y creo que no es tarde para pedirte perdón.

"¿Será por eso que hoy con el sufrimiento de este "mal hecho"? Hermano Simón, vos que sos más fuerte que cualquier brujo de los que pueblan las montañas, aldeas y caseríos, líbrame por favor, te lo digo en nombre de este hombre que siempre piensa en vos, que invoca tu nombre y respeta tu presencia amén.

TERCER DIA

CANDELAS AMARILLAS

Realmente es conmovedor ver hombres, sin distinción de raza, y que se han sentido marginados del trabajo por la edad, llorar suplicantes ante la deidad indígena implorando "protección".....

En el medio nuestro es fácil ver a hombres que llegan al medio siglo, con su candela amarilla entre la bolsa, especialmente entre las comunidades indígenas. Estas candelas serán el puete entre el que pide y el que dá. La candela amarilla representa la "protección" para la persona adulta.

ORACION

Oh.... querido San Simón

Vos que sos la fuete inagotable de
maravillosas bondades y que conocés
los sufrimientos de la humanidad, a
vos acudo con toda mi fe, para que
me des tu santa protección. Amén.

DIA CUARTO

SAN SIMON Y LAS CANDELAS ROJAS

La candela roja es la que el hombre joven y la indígena en edad casadera ofrecen al Maximón de su comunidad, ya que con ella se le pide un amor sincero que se fundamente en la buena voluntad y fe de sus vidas. Se le pide, con la candela roja, porque la traición no llegue a tocar las puertas de su hogar, porque la fe en el Maximón sea inquebrantable y porque la voluntad sea férrea para poder resistir los embates de la vida.

HERMANITO SIMON...
HERMANITO SIMON...

A vos acudo hoy... A vos que siempre fuiste apartado y por eso sufriste. Por la soledad que padeciste, por eso acudo a vos, porque comprendás mi sufrimiento en las noches silenciosas por la persona que yo quiero.

A vos acudo hoy, hermanito Simón, invocando a tu espíritu, porque sea sólo para mí y para nadie más. Te prometo siempre tu candela roja, tu guaro, tu puro y tortilla.

Hermanito Simón, que mi ruego llegue hasta donde te encontrarás.

DIA QUINTO

CANDELA AZUL

La candelita azul para el hermanito Simón te trae trabajo y suerte. Por eso sí, le tenés que llevar con devoción, buscar un sitio como en el que estamos aquí parados y ver que un pedazo del cielo se parezca a tu candela para pedir el primer deseo...

--¿Y cuál es su primer deseo?

--Soñar al hermanito Simón.... Porque al soñarlo sé que me va a ir bien y que mi candela azul no la compré por gusto, que me va a dar lo que se le pide con ella...

--¿Qué le pide con ella, al llevar la candela azul?

--Ah... se le pide lo mejor que pueda tener uno de pobre: trabajo y suerte... Si yo tengo eso, ¿para que quiero más?

¿Cuál es la oración de la candela azul?

"Hermano San Simón... Vos que todo lo ves, que sos un justo porque dar al que bien se porta, hoy acudo a tu espíritu para que allá en la costa no me dé el paludismo ni los fríos, ni el catarro.

"Hermanito Simón velá por mi casa y mis padres. Allí te dejo mi candela azul, el guaro, la tortilla y el puro para que me hagas el favor. Amén".

DIA SEXTO

CANDELAS VERDES

Los colores de las candelas tienen un significado especial, en relación a la petición formulada. Por ejemplo: las candelas que más se venden son las verdes; éstas -me comentaba un fabricante de velas-, tienen mayor demanda, porque son las que se le encienden a San Simón para la prosperidad de los negocios. Y la efectividad, si usted ve que una persona que llega a determiando sitio donde se adora a San Simón, las candelas verdes, es señal inequívoca de que es comerciante en pequeña o gran escala; depende como llegue vestido y en qué vaya subido. Si la persona que lleva las candelas verdes es bien plantada y va en un flamante automóvil, indiscutiblemente es dueña de un próspero comercio, si, por el contrario, llega en camioneta extra urbana, ha de poseer un negocio en pequeña escala. En consecuencia, las candelas verdes, ofrendadas al Maximón de cualquier lugar, llevan la petición, la súplica al "santo indígena" de que le negocio no caiga, que siempre esté "protegido" por su poder sobrenatura. Entre los adoradores de San Simón que tienen negocio, no falta una pequeña fotografía de la deidad en el último rincón del cuarto, con su tortilla, su puro, su guaro regado y la infaltable candela verde.

ORACION A SAN SIMON

¡Oh poderoso San Simón; yo humilde criatura desechada de todos vengo a postrarme ante vos para que tu espíritu me ayude en todos mis actos y en cada peligro que sea necesario.

Así quiero que me hagas tus milagros que te pido. ¡Oh Judas Simón, te llamo hermano en todo momento porque es que si están en la tierra, en las montañas, llanos, bosques, ciudades, campos, aldeas y casas.

DIA SEPTIMO

CANDELAS MORADAS

"LAS CANDELAS PAR A DEJAR LOS VICIOS"

El significado de la candela morada es muy sencillo; por ejemplo, cuando usted vea a un hombre con una candela morada en la mano. es seña que quiere dejar el guaro o algún vicio...

Es conmovedor realmente ver como llegan estos hombres a llorarle al Maximón con su candela morada, para que "les quite la sed del guaro". Es la candela color "lila" la que se enciende ante Maximón con el rito tradicional de la torilla, el puro y el vaso de agua con guaro, para que el ruego llegue y el "milagro" se produzca.

De todos los ritos, éste y el de los niños es el más conmovedor. Me explicaban que hay hechos realmente sorprendentes relacionados con lo expuesto. Hombres que después de haber bebido por largos años han llegado a su recuperación total, amparados por la fe, la fuerza de voluntad y la creencia en el Maximón.

ORACION A SAN SIMON

Oh, poderoso San Simón, yo humilde criatura, desechada de todos, vengo a postrarme ante vos para que tu espíritu me ayude en todos mis actos y en todo peligro que sea necesario.

Si es en el amor, tu detendrás al nombre que quiero; si es en el negocio, que jamás caiga porque tu espíritu no dejará que los brujos tengan más poder que vos; si es un enemigo; sos vos quien tiene que vencer, si son enemigos ocultos, hace que se vayan en cuanto te nombre.

Oh poderoso San Simón. te ofrezco tu puro, tus tortillas y tu guarito y candelas si me sacas de cualquier peligro en que me encuentre, ya sea que me demanden por deudas, que por el tiempo no lo pueda pagar, te pido que el juez quede vencido y al lado mío, por tu nombre que todo quede en el olvido y te lo pido en nombre de aquel a quien vendiste por treinta monedas y fueron dadas a los más necesitados.

Te pido. pues, que cumplas los milagros que te pido

DIA OCTAVO

CANDELAS ROSADAS - SALUD Y ESPERANZA

Allí se unen, como en una sola petición, oraciones distintas en dialecto y castellano, pronunciadas muchas veces con lágrimas en los ojos por ladinos e indígenas.

Frente a la la deidad indígena, acuden los deshauciados por los médicos, los paralíticos, cancerosos y desafortunados en los negocios. Allí está desde a más enconpetada dueña de un moderno almacén de la Sexta Avenida, hasta el vendedor más sencillo de la Terminal de Buses de la Zona 4, que ha hecho viaje directo con el afán de pedir la "Protección" debida a Maximón de Zunil. Y todos regresan con el ánimo alto, con la fé mas pura de que la "protección" ha sido concedida y el ruego escuchado. Asi regresa nuestro indígena lleno de esperanza y proyectos para el porvenir, pronunciando a flor de labios:

-Gracias hermano Simón, gracias por lo que me das. Te prometo, mientras viva, tu guaro, tus puros y tortillas, para que no me falte tu protección.

Significado de las candelas que se le encienden a esta imagen:

Rojas	Amor. fe y voluntad
Amarillas	Protección para personas
Verdes	Negocio y prosperidad.
Azules	Trabajo y suerte.
Rosadas	Salud y esperanza.
Negras	Contra enemigos y envidias.
Moradas	Contra los vicios y malos pensamientos.
Celestes	Dinero. felicidad. viajes y estudio.
Amarillas	Protección para personas adultas.
Blancas	Protección para los niños.

HERMANO: SAN SIMON

Tract C "Oración al Rey San Pascual"
"Prayer to King San Pascual"

All powerful lord, who being so independent in the dominion of all creation, thou wished to be born poor so as to give everyone an example through thy merits and those of thy servant. King San Pascual, I ask thee to free my heart from all worldly things, and thou, blessed King San Pascual, grant me from the Most High the favour that I ask of thee. I trust I will obtain this with thine help.

Oh supreme King whose imperious voice causes the world to tremble and obey even the impossible! Out of love thou became man and obeyed until death, I ask thee because of thy merits and those of the blessed King San Pascual, that thou grant me this virtue to obey thy divine precepts; that I would obtain such is always auspicious. And thou, oh glorious Saint, grant me the grace I request, I hope to receive such through thee, patron, for the greater glory of God and the good of my soul.

Omnipotent God, purest spirit and mirror without blemish, by subjecting thyself to the miseries of humans, it is only those who are unworthy of thy purity that thou may not wish to heed. King San Pascual, I pray that thou may beautify my soul with angelic virtue so that thy divine image and resemblance is never erased.

Incomprehensible God, I humbly petition thou, because of the merits of my Saviour Jesus Christ and for those of King San Pascual, that thou may assist me with thy grace to revive my faith, that it would shine with good deeds and merit its existence in this life and enjoy thy wonderful countenance in the next. And thou, miraculous San Pascual, intercede for me to the Lord so as to obtain the favour which I have requested in this prayer to the greater glory of God and thyself.

Father of mercy, God of consolation, infinitely exceed thy mercy for my faults and, though the multitude of these intimidates me, the infinity of these encourages me to wish for the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ and for the blessed King San Pascual so that thy clemency will forgive my sins. And thee, oh marvelous King San Pascual, seated next to God, so that thou may grant me the favour I request, through thine intercession, I promise to glorify and honour God.

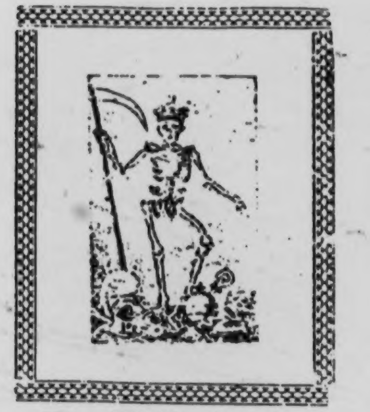
My Lord and Loving God, for thine infinite merits and for those of the blessed King San Pascual, embrace my heart with the fire of thy divine love so that, burning in charity, I will always long for thee as my only centre and charitably love my neighbour as myself. And thou, oh pious San Pascual, grant me the favour and charity that I ask of thee, for which I wish for the glory of God.

Blessed and vast God, not satisfied to simply come to earth to redeem mankind at the cost of thy precious blood, thou remained sacralized so that man may be transformed by thee. I ask thee, for thine infinite merits and for the glory of San Pascual, that thou would prepare my soul with thy divine grace so that I may worthily receive thee, properly take pleasure in thee for eternity. And thou, blessed King San Pascual, send to God the favour that I pray to thee for, and I trust it will be granted by thine intercession and for the greater glory of God and thyself.

I ask thee, Lord and eternal God, that with your great power you might praise your divine mother so that in her, humanity will find solace. Submissively I ask thee, for the merits of your holy Son and for the blessed King San Pascual, thou come to my assistance with thy grace so that the duty of your son may be fulfilled. And thou, oh San Pascual, intercede for me with the Lord so that the mercy I ask may be granted for the glory of God and thyself.

Oh my Lord and supreme God! That by giving life to man, thou wished that thine only Son would die and with his death so defeat our death. I ask thee, through the merits of King San Pascual, that thou favour me with thine assistance so that my life would be put in order and I would achieve death in thy divine grace and possess such glory. And thou, oh most powerful King San Pascual, seated next to the Lord, so that thou grant me the favour for which I ask, and for thine intercession, I wish the greater glory of God and thyself.

Tract C: Copy of Original



ORACION AL
REY SAN PASCUAL

Señor, Todopoderoso que siendo tan independiente en el dominio de lo creado quisiste nacer pobre para darnos ejemplo, por vuestros méritos por los del Rey San Pascual os suplico desprendáis mi corazón de las cosas de este mundo y vos, bienaventurado San Pascual conseguidme del Altísimo el favor que os pido y confío lograrlo con vuestro amparo.

¡Oh, Rey supremo a cuya imperiosa voz tiembla el orbe y obedece hasta lo imposible! pues por mi amor te hiciste hombre y obedeciste hasta la muerte, suplícoos por tus méritos y por los del bienaventurado Rey San Pascual me concedáis esta virtud para que obedeciendo vuestros divinos preceptos obtenga siempre propicio Y vos, oh glorioso Santo alcanzadme la gracia que imploro y espero conseguir mediante vuestro patrocinio para mayor gloria de Dios y bien de mi alma.

Dios Omnipotente, espíritu purísimo y espejo sin mancilla, que sujetándoos a las miserias humanas, sólo a las que desdecían de la pureza no quisite sujetaros. Rey San Pascual que hermosees mi alma con virtud angélica para que jamás se borre vuestra divina imágen y semejanza.

Dios incomprensible, humildemente os suplico por los méritos de mi Redentor Jesucristo y por los del Rey San Pascual me asistáis con vuestra gracia para que avivando mi fe, resplandezca con buenas obras y merezca su práctica en esta vida y gozar vuestra amable visita en la otra. Y vos, milagroso San Pascual, interceded por mí al Señor para que consiga la gracia que os pido en esta oración a mayor gloria de Dios y vuestra.

Padre de las misericordias, Dios de consolación, infinitamente excede vuestra piedad a mis culpas y aunque la multitud de éstas me acobarda lo infinito de aquello me alienta a esperar por los méritos de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo y por las del bienaventurado Rey San Pascual que vuestra clemencia perdonará mis culpas. Y vos, oh prodigioso Rey San Pascual, sed medianero con Dios para que conceda la gracia que le suplico y con vuestra intercesión me prometo a mayor gloria y honor de Dios.

Amorosísimo Dios y Señor mío por los infinitos méritos y por los del bienaventurado Rey San Pascual abraza mi corazón con el fuego de tu divino amor para que ardiendo en caridad suspire siempre por vos como mi único centro y ame caritativamente a mi prójimo como a mí mismo y vos, oh piadoso San Pascual alcanzadme la gracia que os pido y de tu caridad espero para la gloria de Dios.

Bienaventurado Dios inmenso, que no satisfecho de haber venido al mundo para redimir al género humano a costa de vuestra preciosa sangre, os quedaistéis sacramentado para que se transforme en Vos, hombre. Suplícoos por vuestros infinitos méritos y por la gloria de San Pascual dispongáis mi alma con vuestra divina gracia para que dignamente os reciba, debidamente os goce por una eternidad. Y vos bienaventurado Rey San Pascual, alcanzadme de Dios el favor que os ruego y confío lograr por vuestra intercesión para mayor honra de Dios y vuestra.

Suplícoos Señor y Dios eterno que con tu gran poder engrandecisteis a tu divina madre para que en ella encontrara consuelo la humanidad, rendidamente os suplico, por los méritos de tu santísimo Hijo y por el bienaventurado Rey San Pascual me asistais con vuestra gracia para que cumpla ya con la obligación del hijo. Y vos, oh San Pascual, interceded por mí con el Señor para que me conceda la merced que pido para gloria de Dios y vuestra.

Oh, soberano Dios y Señor mío! que por dar al hombre vida, quisiste que vuestro unigénito Hijo muriera y con su muerte quedara la nuestra vencida. Os suplico por los méritos del Rey San Pascual me favorezcais con vuestra asistencia para que ordene mi vida y logre morir en tu divina gracia y gozar en la gloria. Y vos, oh portentoso Rey San Pascual, sedme medianero con el Señor para que consiga la gracia que os pido y por tu intercesión espero para mayor gloria de Dios y vuestra — Amén.

Tract D "Vida Y Milagros de San Simón"
"Life and Miracles of San Simón"

This is a compilation of prayer tracts to San Simón, Rey San Pascual and Saint Jude. It should be noted that this document shares a similar title as a longer publication, by Gaitan (1979), though shares no other similarity.The first prayer in this booklet is to San Simón, and is the same as prayer tract A translated above. The second prayer in to Rey San Pascual, and is similar to tract D translated above. What follows is a translation of the prayer to Saint Jude.

Prayer to Saint Jude

My most powerful lawyer, Saint Jude, here thou has me prostrated at thy feet with humility and ardour, opening to thee my contrite heart and showing thee my spiritual and temporal needs. Most dignified and kind Saint, show me thy kind face and observe the labours that weigh me down, oppressing my heart. If it is true that thou possesses a benevolent heart, inclined to bring aid to the distressed whom thee encounter, I am certain that thou will not look upon me with indifference, without experiencing sentiments of tenderness and compassion in thy heart.

I am lost completely in the arms of thy confidence, and nourished by thy patronage, of which thou offer admirable proofs, above all with those that are found in the most need. I do not hesitate to present myself at the throne of your glory to openly express my needs....[untranslatable]...raised to Heaven and ask this for me to the Most High with your intercession, the great favour of bringing peace to my afflicted heart. If it is true that from the inexhaustible source of divine mercy you achieve so many favours, than you must be the closest to such. Thou, who because of the strong relations that you have with Jesus Christ and because of your labourious apostleship, are so close to the inexhaustible source of goodness and divine benevolence.

It is never heard that a disciple of yours would turn to you without need, spending your mercies and leaving discontented from the throne of your mercy: in the same manner that you can bring aid to us so effectively, you know the how to determine the most needy, avoiding our trivial desires. If you are able to and wish to aid me, in you I place my hope and confidence. You ease my pain, you touch my miserable state. Console and heal me of such pains so that, consoled by you of the distresses that condemn me in life, loving and serving God more freely, I might one day participate in the everlasting joys of the future life. Amen.

Miraculous Image of Saint Jude
which is venerated in the Republic of Guatemala

Tract D: Copy of Original

VIDA y MILAGROS

de SAN SIMON

NOTA: La imagen de San Simón debe mantenerse en un rinconcito del dormitorio, de preferencia que sea en el piso, con su vaso de agua, su candelita roja, florecitas y además cuantas veces se pueda se le debe quemar incienso a las 12 del día en punto, también cuando se pueda dar una limosna a cualquier persona necesitada, debe hacerse con toda la voluntad y siempre en nombre de este Santo varón.

Significado de las candelas que se le encienden a este imagen:

ROJAS:	Amor, fe y voluntad.
VERDES:	Negocios y prosperidad.
AZULES:	Trabajo y suerte.
ROSADAS:	Salud y esperanza.
NEGRAS:	Conta enemigos y envidias.
MORADAS:	Contra los vicios y malos pensamientos.
CELESTES:	Dinero, felicidad, viajes y estudio.

Oración

SAN SIMON

Hermano Simón, hermano Simón, hermano Simón.

Tú que eres fuente inagotable de maravillosas bondades y que conoces los sufrimientos de la humanidad. A ti acudo con toda mi fe y esperanza en demanda de tu santa protección.

Yo reconozco todas mis faltas y pecados cometidos en el curso de mi vida y como responsable de tanto mal, tal vez no merezco tus santos favores, pero como sé que eres el protector de los humanos por eso vengo a pedirte el perdón de mis culpas y a la vez imploro de ti una mirada de misericordia para esta humilde figura, rogándote con toda mi

alma no desoigas mis súplicas, pues al invocar tu santo nombre deposito en tus manos mis sufrimientos con la esperanza de lograr con tu poder maravilloso la solución de mis problemas, tanto materiales como espirituales.

Yo siempre será tu fiel devoto porque creo firmemente en tu gran poder, el cual se ha manifestado siempre a través de tus santos milagros desde aquel glorioso 28 de octubre, día de San Judas Tadeo, en que hiciste tu aparición en tierras de Guatemala, en donde te alabamos todos tus devotos con el mayor fervor, por eso aquí me tienes rendido a tu plantas y arrepentido de cuanto mal he hecho en este mundo, por tal razón yo te ruego y espero en ti el perdón de mis pecados y que así como le concediste tantos favores a tu amignFelipe, aquel indígena que tuvo la gran dicha de encontrarte en uno de los montes de Zunil, así me concedas a mí lo que te pido. Amén.

AMARILLAS:	Protección para personas adultas.
BLANCAS:	Protección para los niños.

ORACION A SAN PASCUAL

Señor todopoderoso, que siendo tan independiente en lo absoluto, dominio de todo lo creado, quisiste nacer pobre para darnos a todos ejemplo por vuestros méritos y por los de vuestro siervo. Rev. San Pascual, os suplico desprendáis mi corazón de todas las cosas del mundo, para que use de ellas como si no las uzsare y procure enriquecer mi alma anehlando por las verdaderas riquezas. Y Vos bienaventurado Rey San Pascual, conseguidme del meto. Para mayor honra y gloria de Dios Altísimo, el favor que os pido y confío.

Lograr con vuestro amparo para mayor

a cuya imperiosa voz tiembla el orbe y obedece hasta lo insensible, pues por mi amor os hiciste hombre y obediente hata la muerte, suplícote por vuestros méritos y por los del bienaventura Rey San Pascual, me concedas esta importante virtud para que obedeciendo puntual vuestros divinos peceptos os tenga siempre propicios. Y Voz, oh, glorioso Santo, alcanzadme la gracia que rendidamente imploro y espero conseguir mediante vuestro patrocinio, para gloria de Dios y bien de mi alma. Dios omnipotente, espíritu purísimo y espejo sin mancilla, que sujetándose a las miserias de la naturaleza humana, sólo a los que desdeclan de la pureza no quisisteis sujetaros. Ruégoos por vuestros méritos y por los del Rey San Pascual, que hermosees mi alma con esta virtud angélica para que jamás se borre de ella vuestra divina Imagen

y semejanza. Y Voz, oh glorioso Rey San Pascual, solicitadme la gracia que os pido y que por vuestra intercesión espero para gloria de Dios y nuestra. Dios incomprensible, cuyos innumerables artículos con rendida y ciega fe confieso; humildemente os suplico por los méritos de mi Redentór Jesucritsto y por los del Rey San Juan Pascual, me asistás con vuestra divina gracia, para que àvivando mi fe, resplandezca con muchas buenas obras y merezca por su práctica en esta vida de vuestra amable visita en la otra. Y Vos milagroso Rey San Pascual, interced por mí al Señor, para que consiga la gracia que os pido en esta oración a mayor gloria de Dios y vuestra. Padre de misericordias y Dios de toda consolación, infinitamente excede vuestra piedad a mis culpas, aunque la multitud de éstas me acobarda lo infinito de aquellas me alienta a esperar por los

méritos de mi Señor Jesucrito y por los del bienaventurado Rey San Pascual, que vuestra infinita clemencia me perdonará mis culpas sino que me dará gracias para asegurar mi felicidad eterna. Y Voz, oh prodigiosos Rey San Pascual, sed medianero con Dios para que me conceda la gracia que os suplico y con vuestra intercesión me procen las Penas (sean desvanecidas) y merezca yo por siempre ensalza el santo nombre del Señor Todopoderoso, que siendo tan independiente Amorosísimo Señor mío, que por la excesiva caridad con que amásteis al género humano enviásteis a vuestro Unigénito al mundo para sacarnos de la esclavitud del demonio.

Por los infinitos méritos y por los del bienaventurado Rey San Pascual, abracéis mi corazón con el fuego de vuestro divino

amor, para que ardiendo en caridad suspire siempre por Vos como mi único centro y amar caritativamente a mi prójimo como a mí mismo. Y, Vos, oh, prodigioso San Pascual, alcanzdme la gracia que os pido y de vuestra caridad espero para gloria de Dios benignísimo Señor y Dios inmenso que no satisfecho con haber venido al mundo para redimir al género humano a costa de vuestra preciosa sangre os quedaste sacramentado para que se transformarse en vos el hombre, suplícoos por vuestros infinits méritos y por los del glorioso Rey San Pascual, alcanzadme de Dios el beneficio que os ruego y confío lograr mediante vuestra intercesión. Soberano Señor, Dios eterno, que con liberalidad tan amgnífica engrandeciste vuestra divina esposa, nuestra amantísima Madre María, para que tuviese en ella recurso toda naturaleza humana.

ORACION A SAN JUDAS TADEO

Potentísimo abogado mío, San Judas Tadeo, aquí me tenéis postrado a vuestras plantas con humildad y color, abriéndose mi corazón constrito y manifestándoos mis necesidades espirituales y temporales. Dignaos amabilísimo Santo, dirigirme una mirada benigma observando los trabajos que me agobian, los cuales oprimen mi corazón. Si realmente es verdad que tenéis un corazón benéfico, inclinado a socorrer a quien se encuentre angustiado, estoy seguro que no me miraréis con indiferencia sin que no experimentéis en vuestro corazón sentimiento de ternura y compasión.

Me abandono completamente en los brazos de vuestra confianza, y alentado por vuestro patrocinio del cual dáis admirables pruebas, sobre todo con aquellas que se encuentran en mayor necesidad no vacilo en presentarme al trono de vuestra gloria a exponer abiertamente mis necesidades (se expone, Ea, pues, volad al Cielo y conseguidme del Altísimo, con vuestra intercesión, el gran favor de tranquilizar mi afligido corazón. Si es verdad que de la inóhauxta fuente de la divina misericordia alcanza más gracias aquel que a ella está más próxima. Vos que por parentela que os une a Jesucristo y por vuestro laborioso apostolado estáis tan cerca de la inagotable fuente de la bondad y beneficencia divina.

No se ha oído jamá que un devoto vuestro haya recurrido a Vos sin necesidad, expniendo sus misericordias y haya salido descontento del trono de vuestra clemencia: por lo mismo que Vos podéis socorrernos eficazmente sabéis encontrar los medios que nos son más necesarios sutrayéndonos de todos nuestros afanes. Si Vos podéis y queréis ayudarme, en Vos pongo mi esperanza y confianza; os enternezca mi dolor, os conmueva mi estado miserable. Consoladme y reparadme de tantas penas para que consolada por Vos de las angustias que me condenan en vida, amando y sirviendo más libremente a Dios pueda un día participar de los goces imperecederos de la vida futura. Amén.

Milagrosa Imagen de San Judas Tadeo
que se venera en la
República de Guatemala.

Tract E "Ejecutando la Oración del Puro"
Performing the Prayer of the Cigar

I conjure you, cigar, in the name of Satan, Luzbel and Lucifer, pin, pin, for the virtues that you have and those of your friend Diego, make it that NN [insert name of the person you wish to seduce] feels love and desperation for me, that he/she would not have **sociego** [untranslatable] nor thinking, nor eating with neither friends nor women. Holy Mary queen of marvels, where in the city of Mangle there would not be a gentleman who might win you. That dogs howl, cats wail, children cry, and thus as you won the heart of your father and mother so you will win that of NN for me, that I will go out, singing through all the regions right to the seventh region, and all these prayers that I have prayed are praised to the Devil, Satan and Luzbel, and though [...water may be placed...(untranslatable?)] to the Devil he has despaired for me.

Explanation

The procedure is in agreement with that indicated by the drawing of the cigar [the drawing portrays a cigar pierced by seven pins], more precisely by taking the seven pins and burying them after the cigar is burned in the same place where the person who performed the prayer has stood, great results will be achieved for both men and women.

Meaning of the Ashes

To take the form of hole in the house, to take the form of holes in the roads. To begin down the path they are formed into a little step, this is to detain the person. When he/she is about to arrive, they form little steps.

Meaning of the Fire [Lit part of cigar]

If it sparks, it signifies person you want is angry. If flames emerge, it signifies he or she is sick. If it behaves normally, it means the outcome of the prayer will be successful

Meaning of the Pins

If one falls, it signifies that the person you want is ill. If two falls, it means things are fine. If three falls, it means the person you want is thinking of you. If four fall, it means he/she will return to your place abandoned. If five fall it means that he/she is angry. If six fall he/she is coming your way. If seven fall, he/she is convinced. When finished, you must bury the cigar and the pins in the same place that you performed all this.

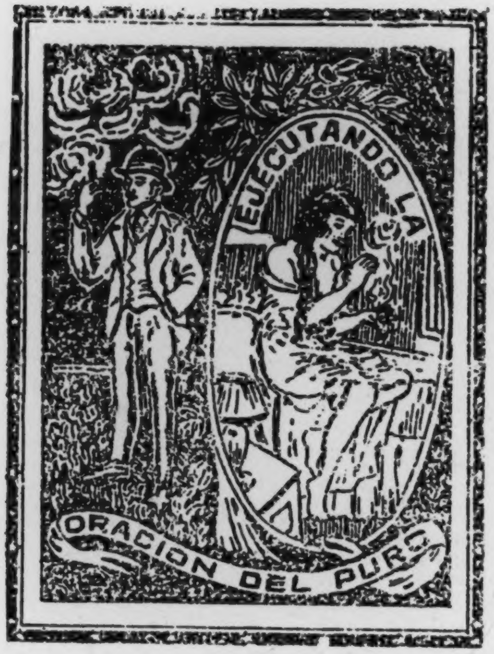
Meaning of the Prayer

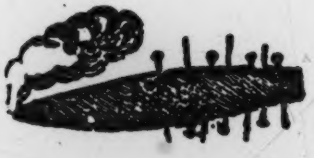
Before starting you must baptize the cigar and the pins and conjure them, giving them three turns first to the right and then in reverse, placing the seven pins in the centre of the cigar, then lighting it on the wrong end, and later, when the smoke emerges, you will know

1. If the person is home the smoke will gather in a cloud
2. If he/she is far away, it will form a palm
3. If he/she is on his/her way, the smoke will move towards the person praying
4. If he/she is with someone, the smoke will form two crowns and when they separate it will form into two bits. When the smoke calms down, it will drift down low and when it seems that he/she will arrive home alone, the cigar will go out.

This ceremony is to be performed on Friday at midnight, for three Fridays. The person performing it must do so alone and with faith.

Tract E: Copy of Original





Yo te conjuro puro, en el nombre de Satanás, Luzbel y Lucifer, alfiler, alfiler, por las virtudes que tú tienes y las de tu amigo, Diego haced que NN sienta amor y desesperación por mí, que no tenga sociego, ni pensando, ni comiendo, ni con amigos y mujeres Santa María reina de maravillas, que en la ciudad de Mangle no haya un caballero que quebrante. Que perros ladren, gatos maullen, niños lloren, y así como venciste el corazón de tu padre y de tu madre así has de vencer el de NN por mí, que yo iré cantando por todas las regiones hasta la séptima región y todas estas oraciones que he rezado son recomendadas al Diablo, Satanás y Luzbel, y aunque le ponga agua al Diablo se ha desesperar por mí.

EXPLICACION

El procedimiento es conforme, lo indica el grabado del puro o sea poniendo los siete alfileres enterrándolos después de apagado en el mismo lugar en que está parado el que reza la oracion dando magníficos resultados tanto para el hombre como para la mujer.

SIGNIFICADO DE LAS CENIZAS

Al formarse hoyos en la casa, al formarse aberturas en las calles. Al ponerse el camino se forma una sola gradita, es que está entretenida la persona. Cuando está por llegar la persona se forman graditas.

SIGNIFICADO DEL FUEGO

Al estar chispeando es que está enojado. Al alzar llamas es que está enfermo. Al estar normal es que está en favor del que reza la oración.

SIGNIFICADO DE LOS ALFILERES

Al caerse uno, es que está enfermo. Al caerse dos, es que está tranquilo. Al caerse tres, es que está pensando en el que reza la oración. Al caerse cuatro, es que está por regresar al lugar abandonado. Si se caen cinco, es que está enojado. Si se caen seis, es que viene de camino. Si se caen siete, es que está convencido. Al terminar hay que enterrar el puro y los alfileres en el mismo lugar donde se ejecuta todo.

SIGNIFICADO DE LA ORACION

Antes de comenzar hay que bautizar el puro y los alfileres y conjurándolos y dándoles tres vueltas primero al derecho y senseguida al revés colocándole los siete alfileres en el centro de puro encendido al revés pues luego al retirarse el humo se conoce:

1o.- Si la persona está en casa se amontona el humo.

2o.- El está lejos se forma una palma.

3o.- Si viene en camino, se regresa el humo para encima del que reza la oración.

4o.- Si está acompañado se forman dos coronas y al separarse se hacen dos pedazos. Cuando ya se ponen tranquilos se va el humo para abajo y cuando piensa llegar al lugar abandonado se apaga el puro.

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Esto se ejecuta día viernes a las doce de la noche por tres viernes, estando solo el que ejecuta la oración, haciéndola con fe.